

King Hussein receives Congress delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein received on Sunday a U.S. Congress delegation at his residence, Bab Al Salam. King Hussein and his guests discussed the scope of bilateral cooperation as a means of stability and security in the Middle East. The American Congress delegation is on a tour of the region.

Jordan Times

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Jordanian plane makes emergency landing in India

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A Royal Jordanian Airlines plane carrying 162 people including three Jordanian ministers landed in western India on Sunday after one of its engines failed. The Press Trust of India said. The aircraft, flying to Amman from Bangkok, made the emergency landing at a civilian airport in the city of Nagpur. No one was hurt during the forced landing, the news agency said, adding that the plane was also not damaged. It was forced to land after one of its engines failed in mid-air, officials said, adding the stranded passengers would be ferried from Nagpur to Amman on another plane.

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U.N. officials discuss effects of sanctions with Libyans

CAIRO (AP) — A U.N. team discussed with Libyan officials the impact of the 5-year U.N. air embargo on Libya. Libyan television reported Sunday. It was the first U.N. delegation to visit Libya since the U.N. Security Council banned international flights to and from Libya in 1992 to pressure Tripoli to hand over two Libyans indicted in the bombing of a Pan Am airliner. Libyan television, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp., said the U.N. delegation, led by Vladimir Petrovski, held talks with senior Libyan diplomats at the Libyan foreign ministry on Saturday to assess the impact of the sanctions. The Libyans briefed the U.N. team on the "adverse human, economic and social effects of these unjust measures," the TV broadcast said.

Israeli army seizes Palestinian land to expand settlement

KHAN YUNIS (AFP) — The Israeli army on Sunday seized a plot of land owned by Palestinians to expand a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip. Palestinian security sources said. An army bulldozer, guarded by Israeli soldiers, began leveling the hectare plot of land, owned by the Palestinian families of Zaa'arab and Shaer outside the settlement block of Gush Katif, the sources said. Palestinian security officials said the army had refused their request that the work be halted.

Israeli chief rabbi to meet Mubarak

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli chief rabbi, Israel Lau, will visit Cairo Monday for a meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, the rabbi's spokesman said Sunday. Mr. Lau, who is the chief rabbi of Ashkenazi, or Eastern European Jews in Israel, will spend several hours in the Egyptian capital and deliver a message from his government to Mr. Mubarak, the spokesman said. The rabbi was personally invited by Mr. Mubarak, and his trip was co-ordinated with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet secretary, Danny Naveh, he said.

UAE hails ties with France ahead of Chirac visit

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Sunday praised its relations with France, on the eve of a visit by French President Jacques Chirac whose country hopes to seal a fighter plane deal. "The relations between the UAE and France are a model of what international relations should be like," said the official news agency WAM. "Political ties between the two countries are exemplary." It said France and the UAE were agreed "on the need to assure the security and stability of the Gulf, to pursue the peace process, halt Israeli aggression, and prevent the 'Judaization' of Jerusalem." France hopes to conclude a \$2.5 billion contract for the sale and modernisation of Mirage 2000 fighter planes during Mr. Chirac's visit on Monday and Tuesday. Over the last decade, France has been the main arms supplier of the UAE. The two countries signed a defence co-operation accord in 1995.

Indyk briefs King on U.S. efforts to resolve peace process deadlock

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday met visiting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk who briefed him on Washington's efforts to bring the peace process between the Palestinians and Israelis back on track.

His Majesty stressed on the need to unite all efforts to push the peace talks forward and restore confidence between the concerned parties through the implementation of what has been previously agreed on.

Mr. Indyk, who arrived from Israel on the third leg of a regional tour that took him to Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas, praised Jordan's peace efforts to overcome the deadlock in peace making.

The U.S. official told reporters that he briefed His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's efforts to move the peace process forward and her upcoming meetings in Europe with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

During his meeting with the U.S. official, Prince Hassan urged the U.S. administration to exert pressures on the Israeli government to implement the agreements signed with the Palestinians.

The Crown Prince also said that Israel should fulfil its commitments on troop redeployment, opening the safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza Strip and launching the Gaza air and sea ports.

"We appreciate the support of Jordan and its efforts... Jordan is a close friend and ally of the United States and we have the highest respect for His Majesty King Hussein and the Jordanian people," Mr. Indyk said following his meeting with Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh.

Butler says 'some progress' in arms talks with Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraqi and U.N. arms experts made "some progress" in disarmament talks Sunday but more discussions are needed to clear the picture about Iraq's secretive weapons programs, chief U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler said.

Mr. Butler told reporters that the two sides discussed ballistic missiles and warheads during a two-hour session.

"The Iraqi side gave a report on where it thought the missile and warheads issue stood," he said.

"It seems to me that some progress is being made," Mr. Butler said. Later, he and his team met with an Iraqi delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz for 3 1/2 hours, the official Iraqi news agency said. It did not elaborate.

Khatami vows not to interfere in Arab-Israeli peace process

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami pledged on Sunday that his country would not get in the way of Arab-Israeli peace talks, but reiterated Iran's opposition to the process.

"No one in his right mind is against the establishment of peace and security in the region for all — Muslims, Christians and Jews," President Khatami told a press conference.

"But we should aim for a dignified peace. If we are opposed to the present talks



His Majesty King Hussein and visiting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk discuss the latest efforts to bring the peace process back on track on Sunday (photo by Yousef 'Allan')

Tarawneh.

"We are very concerned to take Jordan's interests and views into account as we think not only about how to move the peace process but how we advance our common interest in peace and stability in this volatile region," the U.S. official said.

Mr. Indyk, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel who replaced Middle East envoy Dennis Ross in the region, said that his meetings with Palestinian and Israeli officials were to pave the way for the separate meetings between Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, President Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu.

"We are engaged here in the process. The Secretary of State has already made two rounds of meetings and is planning a third meeting," he said.

"She feels for the first time that we are beginning to make progress to narrow the gaps but I do not think that she expects that we will have a complete agreement after this meeting," Mr. Indyk said.

"We need additional meet-

ings and follow up as well and we are moving to try to reach an agreement that will pave the way for final status negotiations," the U.S. official said.

In late November, the Israeli cabinet agreed in principle to conduct a withdrawal from the West Bank, but since then they have been unable to agree on the size of the pullout.

The Oslo interim peace agreement commits Israel to conduct three stages of troop withdrawal by mid-1998, which Palestinians say should eventually put 90 per cent of the West Bank under their control.

Mr. Indyk emphasised that he discussed with Israeli officials further Israeli army redeployment in the West Bank and necessary measures by the Palestinian National Authority to counter terrorism.

"What we are trying to do in these negotiations is to put all these elements together in our agenda in this way we create the environment in which negotiations can move forward," said ambassador Indyk, who is also expected to visit

Syria and Lebanon.

He said that he did not discuss with Israeli officials the size of troop redeployment in the West Bank but stressed that any redeployment from Palestinian territories should be credible.

"Those kinds of details and things the Israelis have discussed among themselves... and we have said before that it is important for the further redeployment to be a credible move," Mr. Indyk said.

Responding to a question on Arab states' demands that the U.S. should exercise pressure on Tel Aviv to implement agreements signed with the Palestinians, Mr. Indyk ruled out such a move by his country.

"What matters is that we are making serious efforts. The Secretary of State has met the leaders in the region trying to put the process back on track," he said.

"We will continue regardless of what happens because we have strategic interest in seeing the peace process moving forward as part of our concern for the peace and stability in this region."

good and positive one," Mr. Butler said on NBC's Meet the Press program earlier Sunday.

He said he will tell Iraq that "we must have access if we are to find those weapons, get rid of them and help Iraq out of this hole in which it has put itself."

Mr. Butler, who is the head of the U.N. Special Commission, arrived in Baghdad Friday on his first visit since pulling out his inspectors last month in protest over Iraq's expulsion of American members of U.N. weapons inspection teams.

The expulsion order touched off a three-week international crisis, which eased when Iraq allowed the Americans back on Nov. 12 under a Russia-brokered

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Deputies demand Cabinet explanation on how King's directives will be executed

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Deputies in the newly elected Lower House pressed Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali on Sunday to say how his government planned to organise Jordan's political life and guarantee greater public freedoms before deciding on whether to vote in favour of his team.

Thirty-two of the 80 deputies, who spoke on the first session of a two-day debate before granting Dr. Majali's government an expected vote of confidence, also asked the prime minister to spell out government policies to combat soaring unemployment and poverty.

Many slammed government plans to introduce draft laws covering press freedoms, political parties and professional organisations saying they feared the new legislation might further repress on Jordan's eight-year-old democratic process.

"We urge abolishing limitations set on public freedoms, enacting a modern

election law and modernising the Press and Publications Law in a way that does not impose on individuals and their way of thinking," Deputy Nasha'at Hamarneh (Madaba) told the House.

Other deputies criticised government steps to normalise ties with Israel in line with the 1994 peace treaty, saying they were disproportionate to the hard-line policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that have dashed overall hopes of Arab-Israeli peace.

Before taking over as premier for the first time in 1993, Dr. Majali was Jordan's chief peace negotiator. He also was one of the signatories to the controversial peace treaty that has divided Jordanians.

"He who follows up with the peace process cannot help but question the government's eagerness towards the process and the unnecessary openness to the Israeli side while Israel pursues its stubbornness and its aggressive actions towards the Palestinians, the Lebanese and

the Syrians," said Deputy Ali Abul Ragheb (Amman's Third District). He was speaking on behalf of the 13-member "Parliamentary Alliance Bloc."

Others pressed the government to stand by "our neighbouring Palestinian brothers" and to take more strides to improve ties with other Arab states, including Iraq, Sudan and Libya — all facing U.N. economic sanctions.

For other deputies, angered by a growing public perception that the new parliament is not politicised, the debate provided them with the first real opportunity to prove otherwise. Many focused in their speeches on demands to improve services in their districts, stressing educational, environmental, agricultural and health needs.

The government is seeking deputies' confidence based on overall policies outlined in a speech from the Throne delivered by His Majesty King Hussein at

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Expelled Iraqi diplomats leave Jordan Wednesday

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Seven Iraqi diplomats expelled by Jordan in retaliation against Baghdad's execution of four Jordanians on smuggling charges will leave on Wednesday, the Foreign Minister said on Sunday.

Dr. Fayez Tarawneh told reporters the Iraqi embassy in Amman had submitted to the Foreign Ministry a list with names of the seven expelled diplomats.

Their departure will leave eight diplomats, including the ambassador, to run the Iraqi mission in Amman, officials said.

Iraqi embassy press attaché

Sa'doun Dawood declined to name the seven expelled diplomats. But he told the Jordan Times that their departure was in line "with instructions by the Jordanian foreign ministry" last Wednesday.

Iraq executed the four men on Monday after a court found them guilty of smuggling car spare parts out of Iraq worth JD620.

Jordan called the penalty excessive, recalled its charges d'affaires from Baghdad and urged Iraq to halt the execution of a fifth Jordanian involved in smuggling.

Iraq has defended its move, saying economic crimes are intolerable in a country suffering from seven years of U.N.-imposed economic sanc-

tions. The execution, which drew unanimous condemnation from ordinary Jordanians and many of the Kingdom's parties — but bilateral ties at a time when they were slightly improving.

"This is a setback that came to our surprise. We hope that things will be settled one way or another," Dr. Tarawneh said.


"We have expressed our deep sorrow. This is definitely a crime against those Jordanians given the circumstances, given the simple act which they did, if they did it," he added. He said Jordan had not received any explanation

(Continued on page 7)

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UAE slams Iran and Israel, sympathises with Iraq

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) president, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Nahayan, urged Iran on Sunday to quit three Gulf islands and criticised Tehran's actions on the disputed territory.

Sheikh Zayed, in a policy speech at the opening of parliament, also received calls for the lifting of U.N. sanctions against Iraq and slammed Israel's right-wing government.

"We are reiterating our calls on the Islamic Republic of Iran to respond to our request for a serious dialogue and to heed the desire by Gulf and Arab states for good relations with Iran," the 80-year-old leader said.

"We call on Iran to correct the situation that has resulted from its occupation of

our three islands and adhere to peaceful means to settle the dispute, including resorting to the International Court of Justice."

Sheikh Zayed was referring to the tiny but strategic islands of Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, which are claimed by both Gulf oil producers.

Negotiations on the islands, seized by Iran in 1971, collapsed five years ago after Tehran refused to discuss the Tunbs. This prompted the UAE to propose international arbitration but Iran has rejected the call.

Sheikh Zayed last week sent a letter to Iran's new President Mohammad Khatami on bilateral ties, which have soured because

of the islands dispute.

Opening the Federal National Council, which is an appointed parliament, Sheikh Zayed said the UAE had kept the door open for a diplomatic solution to the dispute over the islands, which control access to the Gulf.

But he slammed Iran's practices on the islands, in reference to a reported military build-up, opening an airport on Abu Musa and setting up other facilities.

"What worries us is the continuation of the Iranian practices which are aimed at imposing a de facto and perpetuating the occupation," he said.

"But we are certain that no matter how long this occupation lasts, it will not result in any rights or reper-

cussions, and our people will not cede an inch of our national soil," he said.

"The occupation also does not provide a right atmosphere for creating a base of mutual confidence, understanding and security."

The UAE president, who has often called for lifting sanctions on Iraq, warned that the continuation of the embargo in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait could have "dangerous repercussions on the whole region."

"We hope the international community will move to put a quick end to the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people," he said.

Turning to the deadlocked Middle East peace process, he said international securi-

ty was under threat because of what he called Israel's failure to respect U.N. Security Council resolutions.

He accused Israel of adopting oppressive measures against the Palestinians and in an occupied border strip of south Lebanon, and slammed its policy of building Jewish settlements.

"The continuation of these policies and the prevalence of this radical attitude... are pushing the region back to a new cycle of frustration, despair, and violence," he said.

"A just, durable and comprehensive peace cannot be attained with settlements and will not be permanent without Jerusalem remaining Arab."

Egyptian court to announce verdict on female circumcision soon

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt's top administrative court, the Council of State, is expected to give its verdict Dec. 28 on a controversial health ministry ban on female circumcision which is contested by Islamists.

On Sunday, the court president said he would take two weeks for an "in-depth study of the case and the claims by both sides" before

announcing a decision.

A proponent of female circumcision, Sheikh Yussef El Badri, told the court he had found "three new 'hadiths' (acts and words of the Prophet Muhammad)" proving that Muhammad "authorised female circumcision."

"I urge you, for the love of God, not to leave Islam to the mercy of those who want to make licit or illicit,

as they wish, principles which have been in place for 14 centuries," Sheikh Badri told the judge.

However, the highest Sunni Muslim authority, Sheikh Mohammad Sayyid Tantawi of Al Azhar, said last month that "the 'ulemas' (theologians) of Islam are unanimous in agreeing that female circumcision has nothing to do with religion."

In June a lower court overruled a decision by Egyptian Health Minister Ismail Salama a year earlier to ban the age-old practice of removing all or part of the clitoris and sometimes the labia to quell women's sexual desire.

The lower court, acting under pressure from Islamists, accused Mr. Salama of abuse of power.

The health minister, however, maintained his decree and appealed to the top administrative court.

According to official estimates, 98 per cent of girls in Egypt are circumcised and more than 70 per cent of the operations are carried out at home in unhealthy surroundings, often leading to girls bleeding to death.

Turkish commander to visit Egypt to relieve Arab worries

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's top military commander General Ismail Hakkî Karadayi begins a three-day visit to Egypt Monday aimed in part at assuaging Cairo's concerns on Ankara's military cooperation with Israel, Turkish officials said Sunday.

"We aim to convince Egypt that our defence cooperation with Israel does not target any third parties," one foreign ministry official said.

Chief of the Turkish General Staff Karadayi, who will be the guest of his Egyptian counterpart, Lieutenant General Magdy Hatata, is also expected to meet President Hosni Mubarak, they said.

Egypt, together with Syria and Iran, is a prominent critic of Turkey's boosted military ties with the Jewish state.

Turkey, Israel and the United States are due to hold joint naval manoeuvres in the eastern Mediterranean in the second week of January despite protests by several Arab countries and Iran.

Turkey last year bolstered military cooperation with the Jewish state, signing two defence accords under which Israeli pilots conduct training flights in Turkish airspace.

"We have a similar agreement with Egypt, and it is our

sincere wish to boost cooperation with Cairo as well," the Turkish official said.

The 55-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), at a leaders meeting in Tehran last week, denounced Turkey for its military ties with the Jewish state, but Turkish officials dismissed the move.

President Süleiman Demirel said here Saturday: "With whom Turkey will cooperate is our own business. In addition, this kind of a relationship is not aimed at hurting any third party."

The OIC summit also coincided with a visit by Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to Ankara that fuelled Islamic anger on Turkey, a predominantly Muslim but secular state.

Another senior Turkish official also said Saturday that Ankara would not abandon military ties with Israel despite resolutions critical of Turkey at the Islamic summit.

"We are going to continue military cooperation with Israel despite the OIC resolutions," State Minister for relations with the Middle East countries, Ahdan Andican, said in an interview with the Saudi newspaper Al Sharq Al Awsat.

Yemen proposes freeze in border talks with S. Arabia

SANAA (AFP) — President Ali Abdullah Saleh has proposed a freeze in Yemen's deadlocked negotiations with Saudi Arabia on the demarcation of their border, the official news agency SABA reported on Sunday.

"If there is no will on the part of our Saudi brothers to settle the border question at the present time, it is possible to adjourn these negotiations until it is fully convinced and wants" to pursue the talks, he said.

Mr. Saleh, in a telephone call with Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz, said "both countries are deter-

mined to prevent any effort to damage their brotherly relations."

Talks to demarcate the border started in 1995 and have reached an impasse, while diplomatic sources have warned that the situation on the border is tense after a string of incidents since mid-November.

The chiefs of staff of both countries issued calls on Thursday "to avoid the use of force on the border," and said they agreed not to send reinforcements to the region.

The confessions of a Syrian on trial for bombings in Yemen have added to the tension. The suspect said last week he

was recruited by Saudi intelligence to assassinate Yemen's foreign minister, a charge denied by Riyadh.

After clashes in December 1994 and January 1995, the two countries agreed to normalise ties and work to demarcate the border, while Sanaa dropped longstanding claims to three border provinces.

Yemen could seek international arbitration unless the deadlock in negotiations with Saudi Arabia is broken, Vice President Abed Rahbo Mansur Hadi said last week.



IRAQ FLOODS: Iraqi women cross a street on a cart after heavy rain and a lack of proper drainage systems caused flooding in Najaf on Sunday (AFP photo)

Tehran rejects U.N. charges of human rights violations

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Sunday slammed a resolution by the U.N. General Assembly condemning human rights violations in the Islamic Republic, saying the charges were politically motivated and based on false information.

"International cooperation on human rights must be devoid of any ideological antagonism and unreliable information and exaggeration," complained foreign ministry spokesman, Mahmud Mohammadi.

"But the prejudicial

assumptions in the resolution are prompted by a lack of understanding about the political and legal regime in the Islamic Republic," he said, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA.

In a resolution sponsored by the European Union and the United States, the U.N. General Assembly on Friday condemned what it called continuing violations of human rights in Iran, particularly the increasing number of executions.

Mr. Mohammadi charged that allegations made during

the General Assembly session were based on a "malicious report" by U.N. rapporteur for Iran, Maurice Danby Copithorne.

"The sponsors of the resolution have problems with Muslim countries and regrettably Mr. Copithorne's report is far from reflecting the truth, drawn up only to please the sponsors of the resolution," he said.

"Such reports could harm the spirit of cooperation and mutual trust" between Iran and U.N. rapporteurs, Mr. Mohammadi added.

Mother hopes dropping case will bring return of kidnapped son

DEDHAM (AP) — A woman whose son was kidnapped from his elementary school and spirited away to Lebanon by her ex-husband says she is willing for the charges in the case to be dropped if it will bring the boy home.

Molly Scharlach asked a judge in the northeastern state of Massachusetts to drop contempt charges against her former spouse, Mohammad Bachir, and

may decline to testify against him in a related case in Boston. That could result in Bachir's release from jail.

Ms. Scharlach's attorney said she hopes this will persuade Bachir to arrange for the return of their son, Michael, from the Palestinian refugee camp where he has been living with Bachir's parents since he was kidnapped from his first-grade classroom five

years ago. "Hopefully the good faith that Molly has shown will help him see that it is in Michael's best interest to get him back here," the attorney, Guy Caruso, said.

The boy was 7 when Bachir kidnapped him from the Squantum Elementary School on Nov. 12, 1992, and took him to live with his family in the Palestinian refugee camp of Meit Meit, near the Israeli bor-

der, after Ms. Scharlach filed for divorce.

Bachir returned alone to the U.S. in 1994, apparently hoping to resolve his differences with his ex-wife, but was immediately arrested, tried and convicted of kidnapping.

He said Islamic law required that the child remain in Lebanon. He screamed as he was being led away from court two years ago that he wanted his

son to become a suicide bomber.

But Bachir eventually signed papers last month giving Ms. Scharlach sole legal custody of the boy, and she appeared last week before a judge and said she would not oppose the release of her ex-husband — even though there is no guarantee he will actually return the child.

Bachir completed his sentence on the kidnapping

conviction Friday and was immediately taken to a Boston jail, where he was being held on \$25,000 cash bail while awaiting trial for allegedly stalking Ms. Scharlach after they originally separated.

Her attorney said Ms. Scharlach hopes that if she declines to testify, that will encourage Bachir's parents to return her son.

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:10...A Show With the Mouse
14:30...Hammerman
15:00...Gillette Sports Special
15:15...Riding High
15:30...Animal Show
16:10...Oliver Twist
16:30...Neighbours
17:00...French Programmes
19:00...News in French
19:15...French programme
19:30...News Headline
19:35...Comedy — Murphy Brown
20:00...The Health Show
20:30...Babylon-5
21:10...Highlanders
22:00...News in English
22:30...Emergency Room
23:10...Cosmos

PRAYER TIMES

05:01...Fajr
06:23...Sunrise/Duha
11:31...Dhuhr
14:15...Asr
16:38...Maghreb
18:00...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifich, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.
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St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
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Tel. 865897.
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 688404.
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.
Church of Nazarene Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295.
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Sunny and warm weather conditions will prevail with winds southeasterly moderate becoming southwesterly moderate in the afternoon. On Tuesday and Wednesday, temperatures are expected to dip with rainfall

expected in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom. In Amman, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman...05/17
Aqaba...11/24
Deserts...04/18
Jordan Valley...10/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 15, Aqaba 22 Humidity readings: Amman 63 per cent, Aqaba 46 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Walid Al Maeri...675485
Dr. Yousef Rashid...875792
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhalab...758848
Dr. Khalil Ithali...740740
Firas pharmacy...661912
Ferdows pharmacy...778336
Al Aserna pharmacy...637055
Nairoukh pharmacy...623672
Al Salam pharmacy...636730
Yacoub pharmacy...644945
Shmeisani pharmacy...637660
Najib pharmacy...847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir...276852
Al Quds pharmacy...1-
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh...982799
Khalifeh pharmacy...985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre...637111
Civil Defence Department...661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue...630341
Civil Defence Emergency...199
Rescue Police...192 621111 637777
Fire Brigade...617101
Blood Bank...775121
Highway Police...843402
Traffic Police...896390
Public Security Dept...630321
Hotel Complaints...605800
Price Complaints...661176
Water & Sewage Complaints...897467
Amman Municipality Complaints...787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)...121
Overseas Calls...010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs...623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs...661101
Jordan Television...773111
Radio Jordan...774111
Water Authority...680100
J. Electricity Authority...815615
Electric Power Co...636381

RJ Flight Information

08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Luzania...630495
Husseini Medical Centre...813813/32
Khalidi Maternity...644281/6
Alkileh Maternity...64241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity...642362
Malhas, J. Amman...636140
Palestine, Shmeisani...607071
Shmeisani Hospital...669131
University Hospital...845845
Al-Muasher Hospital...667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali...666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali...664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen...77101/3
Al-Bashir...775111/26
Army, Marka...891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital...602240/50
Amal Hospital...674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery...865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital...09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital...09/901540
Ibn Sina Hospital...09/986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital...09/990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital...02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport. Tel. 08/53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 08/52700.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:00...Jeddah (RJ)
08:25...Damascus (RJ)
09:15...New Delhi (RJ)
09:25...Sanaa (RJ)
09:50...Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05...Beirut (RJ)
16:20...Cairo (RJ)
16:25...London (RJ)
18:05...Kuwait (RJ)
18:35...Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
20:15...Amsterdam, New York

Other Flights

20:55...Bangkok (RJ)
21:45...Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
23:59...Jakarta, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
Other Flights
04:15...London (BA)
09:15...Cairo (MS)
09:30...Al Arish (PF)
12:00...Khartoum (SD)
13:25...Bahrain (GF)
14:30...Doha (QR)
15:05...Vienna (OS)
16:00...Dubai (EK)
18:00...Istanbul (SD)
20:00...Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10...Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30...Athens (OA)
01:25...Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20...Beirut (RJ)
08:00...Jeddah (RJ)
08:25...Damascus (RJ)
09:15...New Delhi (RJ)
09:25...Sanaa (RJ)
09:50...Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05...Beirut (RJ)
16:20...Cairo (RJ)
16:25...London (RJ)
18:05...Kuwait (RJ)
18:35...Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
20:15...Amsterdam, New York

Other Flights

06:00...Istanbul (TK)
08:00...Beirut (ME)
08:25...London (BA)
10:30...Al Arish (PF)
10:30...Cairo (MS)
13:20...Istanbul (SD)
14:15...Bahrain (GF)
15:50...Doha (QR)
15:50...Vienna (OS)
17:00...Damascus, Dubai (EK)
19:00...Khartoum (SD)
21:20...Tel Aviv (LY)
23:53...Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:25...Amsterdam (KL)
03:00...Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)

05:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:50...Tel Aviv (LY)
07:55...Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
10:20...Aqaba (RW)
11:40...Amman (QAIA) (RW)
20:30...Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50...Aqaba (RW)

Princess Basma opens annual charity bazaar

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Sunday opened the annual charity bazaar of the Mu'ab Charity Society in Karak, organised in association with the Princess Basma Social Services Centre, at the Sports City in Amman.

The Princess inspected the items on display at the two-day bazaar, which include handicrafts, embroideries, and other traditional works produced by housewives in the rural regions to supplement their families' income.

The proceeds will benefit the Mu'ab society's vocational centre, which offers training to local women in dress making, typing, and computer work and runs a children's nursery.

Red Crescent workshop aims at expanding first aid training

AMMAN (Petra) — A four-day workshop on first aid was opened here Sunday by the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS), in association with the Amman regional office of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, with the participation of 24 representatives of the JNRCS branches in the Kingdom.

In a speech at the opening session, JNRCS Director General Muhammad Hadid stated that the workshop aims at highlighting the principles and importance of first aid services to Jordanian society.

The workshop is also designed to serve as a platform for enabling the JNRCS to recruit and train volunteers to spearhead first aid efforts within the community, he said.

Noting that first aid has been one of the main objectives of the federation, Dr. Hadid said these societies have been performing the humanitarian task of providing first aid to the injured and alleviating their sufferings.

"We in the JNRCS continue to seek volunteers to serve in various regions of the country," he said.

"The participants in the workshop will form a nucleus for expansion, because they will be running training courses for the volunteers in their own respective regions to train the largest possible number of volunteers in first aid services," Dr. Hadid added.

Romanian, Jordanian business reps meet

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Amman World Trade Centre (WTC) Sunday hosted a meeting between a visiting Romanian trade delegation and their Jordanian counterparts as part of the Romanian Trade Week here in Amman, according to a WTC press release Sunday.

Meeting opens tomorrow to discuss use of low-quality water in agriculture

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) office in Cairo and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Eastern Mediterranean regional office in Alexandria, in collaboration with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, are holding an expert consultation in Amman to discuss the "Reuse of Low-Quality Water for Sustainable Agriculture" from Dec. 15-18, according to a press release Sunday.

Two main themes: the agricultural aspects and the health/environmental impacts of using the low-quality water (treated sewage and agricultural drainage waters). The meeting will review the knowledge/experiences related to the reuse of low-quality water for agricultural purposes in order to ensure safe and efficient management, the statement continued.

Outgoing IAF secretary general urges party to end its political isolation

By Francesca Ciriaci
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Outgoing Islamic Action Front (IAF) Secretary General Ishaq Farhan urged the party Sunday to snap out of its political isolation caused by its decision to boycott the Nov. 4 elections.

He also asked the party to consider participation in future governments — a thorny issue that has long divided Islamists — "as a rule of the democratic game."

"In principle, participation in future governments is still open. It is only normal for a political party, though participation will depend on the circumstances and the time," Dr. Farhan told the Jordan Times.

Dr. Farhan, who has served two consecutive two-year terms, is not eligible for a third term in office.

Though the "hawks" appear likely to take over the Shura Council, observers speculate that the "doves" might retain a considerable presence in the Executive Committee.

Hardliners are expected to take over the Shura Council, the IAF's highest decision-making body, in the Dec. 18-19 elections, an event that will heighten tension with the government and the fragmented opposition, analysts said.

The Shura Council, the third to be elected since the IAF was licensed in 1992, will have more "hawks" than "doves" as a "natural reaction to government policies," a party source said.

The IAF Executive Committee, to be elected by the Shura Council, implements decisions by the council and runs day-to-day party affairs, according to the IAF statute.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

* Video cartoon film "Le secret des Sélénites" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 4:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

* "El Crimen de Cuenca" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

* Annual Christmas bazaar, sponsored by Al Hussein Society for the Physically Handicapped, at the Amman Marriott Hotel on Tuesday, Dec. 16 at 10:30 a.m.

LECTURE

* "Limits of Politics in a Linniteless World" (in Arabic) by Mr. Jamil Matar of Egypt at Abdul Hameed Soman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Ghada Dahdaleh at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 20.

* Photo exhibition by Edgardo Rodriguez entitled "Arab Presence in Cuban Architecture" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 20.

* Plastic (abstract) art by Iraqi artist Dhia Khaza'i at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Dec. 18.

* Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

Police announce arrest of gold smugglers

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The State Security Court Sunday sentenced two men to prison terms of eight and 10 years after they were found guilty of trafficking drugs from Lebanon to Jordan in April 1997.

The court also acquitted four others of the same charges.

The military court found Salim S. 57, guilty of possession and trafficking hashish and originally sentenced him to a 15-year imprisonment term and ordered him to pay JD10,000. The sentence was immediately commuted to eight years "because of the case's circumstances and because the defendant is old."

The court also sentenced Durzi S., a 36-year-old Syrian national, to a 10-year imprisonment term and ordered him to pay a JD1,000 fine.

The court acquitted four other suspects, including two being tried in absentia, "for lack of evidence."

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the six defendants were trafficking drugs from Lebanon to Jordan, and in April of this year they smuggled 100 kilograms of hashish with the intent of selling it here.

However, the sheet added, the group's movements were monitored by Anti-Narcotics Department agents, and the first two defendants were arrested on May 19 while attempting to sell around 94 kilograms of hashish to undercover agents in Shmeisani.

In another case, the same court Sunday sentenced two men to prison terms of seven and 10 years with hard labour after they were found guilty of trafficking heroin in the Kingdom.

The court tribunal found Ra'ed A. 31, guilty of trafficking approximately two kilograms of heroin. He originally received a 15-year sentence, which the court immediately commuted to ten years "to give him a second chance because he has no criminal record and supports a family."

The court also found Kayed S., 39, guilty of

complicity to smuggle the drugs and sentenced him to seven years and six months. Additionally, both men were ordered to pay fines of JD2,000 and JD5,000.

The court transcripts stated that Ra'ed possessed two kilograms of heroin and contacted the second defendant, Kayed, to sell the quantity.

EC delegation donates JD2,100 to charity Food for needy to be delivered to Home of Peace

AMMAN (J.T.) — The European Commission (EC) Delegation has donated to charity some JD2,100 in proceeds raised from a concert of the European Union Chamber Orchestra held in Amman late 1996, a statement by the delegation said Sunday.

In a visit to St. Joseph's Parish Sunday, Head of the EC Delegation to Jordan Yves Gazzo delivered to Father Mousa Adeli a consignment of infant cereal and juices, detergents, canned food, blankets, and milk for distribution to Mother Theresa's Home of Peace in Amman and Home of Love in Russeifa, as well as needy students and some 14 families of severe hardship that depend solely on the parish for sustenance, according to the statement.

Part of the proceeds will also be used to purchase token Christmas presents for needy children, it added.

A further JD1,121 raised from the European Film Festival of 1997 will be donated this month to the Centre for Special Education of the Young Muslim Women's Association, the statement said.

The centre was established in 1974 to provide comprehensive services for mild to moderately mentally-challenged children between the ages of three and 18.

It added that the centre, a non-profit institution that relies largely on private, corporate, and government sponsorship, cares for over 175 students in its pre-school, school and

pre-vocational sections. As part of the EU's efforts to enhance the cultural cooperation with Jordan based on the Barcelona process of November 1995, the EC delegation in Jordan holds two cultural concerts each year.

A European Film Festival, organised by the EU member states and their



Two sisters from Mother Theresa's Home of Peace in Amman meet with Head of the EC Delegation Yves Gazzo (Photo by Robert Massis)

embassies in Jordan, is held in Amman each year in an effort to create a climate of understanding of the European culture and further enhance the cultural exchange between countries of the EU and Jordan.

The festival proceeds also went to the Centre for Special Education in 1996.

Old problems cloud Albright's new era in Africa

VICTORIA FALLS, Zimbabwe (R) — Over the past week, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has sought to open a new chapter in U.S. relations with Africa's new leaders. But the policy risks running aground on Africa's old problems.

In a seven-nation tour of the continent, the first of her 11-month tenure, Ms. Albright spoke much of partnership, democracy, human rights, trade and investment to replace the old patron-client relationships of the cold war era.

U.S. officials say that despite continued headlines about coups and massacres out of Africa, the continent has made real strides in recent years, ending some conflicts, moving towards democratic reforms and freeing up economies.

Out of 48 sub-Saharan states, the State Department now counts 23 democracies compared with just five in 1989.

The goal of U.S. policy over the past year, and trip in particular, has been to spread liberal values and open up new fields for U.S. business in a region whose exports do not seriously threaten American industries.

But U.S. officials concede that these aims are threatened by the current turbulence in Central Africa, and it was this problem that Ms. Albright set out to address in her tour, which was to

end in Zimbabwe Monday. Key to her strategy is the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire, where the massively corrupt 32-year rule of Mobutu Sese Seko was ended in May by insurgent forces under Laurent Kabila, now president.

Despite years of cold war U.S. support for the anti-Communist Mobutu, U.S. officials now portray Zaire as a "black hole" that threatened the entire region, and whose future will also influence the entire region.

"As the Democratic Republic of the Congo goes, we believe so will go much of the rest of southern, eastern and Central Africa, given its strategic location," said one senior official accompanying Albright.

In Kinshasa, Ms. Albright bent over backwards to show understanding of Mr. Kabila's situation, and officials said he "seemed to take on board" her pitch about the need to end as soon as feasible current restrictions on political parties.

But at a news conference, Mr. Kabila did much to undo her work by angrily denouncing a detained opposition figure as a troublemaker, forcing Ms. Albright to issue a statement that his words clashed with the message she had tried to deliver.

Later, U.S. officials said the future of the country

was in the balance. "Congo can essentially go one of two ways: it can yet again be unstable, export instability... or it can pull out of the bog that it's been in," one said.

U.S. arguments for "engaging" with Ms. Kabila holl down to the view that to stand aloof would be worse.

"The alternative would be to leave this government alone to its own devices and let happen what may, and I think the results of that may be much less constructive and much less consonant with U.S. interest," an official said.

Elsewhere on her African tour — which also took in Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, South Africa and Zimbabwe — Ms. Albright reported having useful talks but was reminded that some problems remain too deep-rooted for a quick fix.

Within hours of her visit to Rwanda, scene of a 1994 massacre of up to 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus by Hutu extremists, reports surfaced of a fresh killing of more than 200 Congolese Tutsi refugees in the troubled northwest.

And in Angola, opposition UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi refused her invitation to a meeting, prompting Ms. Albright to give a warning that if he did not join his MPLA rivals in implementing a 1994 peace accord, he would be left behind.

In east Africa, Ms. Albright's discussions made clear that even in the new era of partnership, old-fashioned power politics and influence-building remain a potent policy consideration.

Much of the U.S. energy that used to be devoted to countering Soviet influence in Africa has now been turned to containing the Islamist government of Sudan, which U.S. officials see as plotting to destabilise the region.

Ms. Albright stepped up the pressure on Khartoum by meeting Sudanese rebel leader John Garang in Kampala and calling for the replacement of the current government.

So important to Washington are the "front-line" states of Uganda and Ethiopia, which border Sudan, that Albright took a lenient view of their imperfections.

While U.S. officials said privately that Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was intolerant of media criticism, Ms. Albright said his government was "earning the world's admiration" for its reforms at home and leadership abroad.

Uganda, described in a state department fact sheet as a "uniparty democracy," was held up by Ms. Albright as a "beacon of hope" for the region because of its stability and economic growth.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin casts his vote in an election for the Moscow city parliament (Reuters photo)

Yeltsin says he is not yet well but working

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin, convalescing from a viral infection in a sanatorium outside Moscow, said Sunday he was not yet fully recovered but was in full command.

"I caught a sore throat somewhere. I'm a bit weak. On the whole I don't feel too good," Mr. Yeltsin said, speaking in a hoarse voice after casting his vote at the sanatorium in an election for the Moscow city parliament.

"The doctors say it is a normal virus... it's nothing special, it's the one going around in Moscow," he told reporters, adding that it would take about 10 days to clear up.

"I am a Muscovite so I caught it. It shows that I am in touch with Muscovites," he said with a smile.

The 66-year-old president seemed out of sorts but moved freely around the room where a ballot box and polling booths had been set up for him and his wife.

Asked if he was working, he said aides brought him a huge pile of papers each day.

"Half a metre at least. I spend at least four hours sitting at a table, with breaks of course," he added.

"Things are all right in Russia. I am following things all the time... in a word there is control. I am being kept

informed, about security matters too, so don't worry."

Saturday, doctors said Mr. Yeltsin's temperature was normal for a second day running and his blood pressure was stable.

The surgeon who conducted heart surgery on Mr. Yeltsin in November last year told Reuters Friday the disease had nothing to do with the operation and that the president should be back at work full time next week.

The Kremlin had said Saturday Mr. Yeltsin would be allowed to take a walk outside. But a spokesman was unable to confirm he would go on Sunday, when temperatures plunged to minus 20 Celsius in the snow-covered capital.

Mr. Yeltsin expressed concern over recent tragedies in Russia, including two air crashes and an explosion in a coal mine which killed dozens of people.

"Such things have not happened for a long time," he said, adding that everything was being done to help those injured and the relatives of the victims.

The Kremlin has said Mr. Yeltsin would not have any meetings with politicians this week and that several planned events had been cancelled.

These include a meeting

due Wednesday of a council governing a union created between Russia and Belarus this year and a session of the committee governing a customs union with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus a day later.

A meeting with Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov planned for Friday has also been put off.

But, underlining that it was business-as-usual for the government, Prime Minister Viktor Chernenko said he was due to be in Turkey for an official visit Monday and Tuesday.

The last time Mr. Yeltsin voted, in the 1996 presidential election in which he won a second term, he was also at Barvikha, situated among woods and low hills west of Moscow.

Officials then explained that he was suffering merely from "a cold." It turned out that he had renewed heart problems, which eventually forced him to have a bypass operation.

The Kremlin has since pledged more openness about Mr. Yeltsin's health and has issued daily bulletins since he went into Barvikha Wednesday with the infection, which doctors said had developed from a cold caught on a visit to Sweden a week before.

Blair style starts to irk some in Europe

LUXEMBOURG (R) — British Prime Minister Tony Blair impressed his fellow European leaders at their Luxembourg summit, but not always in the way he might have chosen.

Mr. Blair used his persuasion and charm in several hours of hard bargaining to ensure what he described as a sensible solution to govern Britain's relations with the countries who will join Europe's single currency in 1999.

"Britain's interests were presented with a lot of charm and considerable persistence," said one German official. Another was less flattering, saying Mr. Blair "got on people's nerves."

Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi, on the other hand, was impressed, praising Mr. Blair's "extraordinary spirit of collaboration and strong personal contribution" which he said was promising for the future.

Mr. Blair had no regrets, saying such debates did not have to be divisive and were inevitable. "These things will happen between member countries all the way through," he commented.

The issue of the "Euro-X" club of single currency countries and how it would interact with non-members appeared to some countries as a secondary one which did not merit several hours of hairsplitting argument.

"It took a very long time to settle this simple question," Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok told journalists, describing it as a battle of prestige between Britain and France.

It was the veteran heavyweight figure of Chancellor Helmut Kohl who intervened

Friday to cut short some six hours of argument and propose a simple formula which Mr. Blair and his French counterpart Lionel Jospin both accepted.

"Both of them got a good story to take home," Mr. Kok commented dryly.

The French described the British prime minister as speaking repeatedly "with some tenacity" on the "Euro-X" issue. "Blair ended up isolated," said one French diplomat. "Blair begins to irritate his colleagues," was the headline in Le Figaro.

President Jacques Chirac however described Mr. Blair's defence of his position as "brilliant."

In Friday's meeting Mr. Blair intervened in the discussion 30 times, according to diplomats. Saturday, once the row was over, he was described as "subdued."

Mr. Blair's conservative predecessors Margaret Thatcher and John Major frequently clashed with their EU partners and were often in a minority of one.

Mr. Blair has tried hard to combine a robust defence of Britain's interests — a line that plays well at home — with a cooperative, pro-European style which will get results around the table.

"A more constructive relationship pays dividends," he told journalists.

Unlike previous disputes involving Britain, the "Euro-X" row involved an attempt by London to stay within the inner EU circle of decision-making, not to opt out.

With the way now clear after Luxembourg for EU enlargement to begin, Mr. Blair hopes to make the most of his six-month presidency

of the bloc from January to boost both Britain's prestige in Europe and Europe's reputation in Britain.

The prime minister hopes a successful spell with Britain at the helm, culminating in a summit in Cardiff in June, will win over overwhelmingly suspicious voters to the idea of dropping the pound and joining the euro after the next election.

Mr. Blair has specifically promised to put single currency membership to a referendum. Aides say he is already thinking hard about how to bring public opinion round to eventual full membership of economic and monetary union some time after 2000.

Mr. Blair will preside over a summit in Brussels in May which will finalise which countries are to join the single currency in 1999 and at which exchange rates.

The "Euro-X" club, now legitimised by the EU as an inner club for single currency countries, albeit with no decision-making powers, is not due to function fully until 1999.

But diplomats say the "in" countries could start meeting informally as early as the second half of 1998, when Austria, a certain member of the single currency zone, will be sitting in the presidency chair.

The approach of the single currency will highlight the contradiction in British policy between staying outside the euro at its launch and wanting to play a central role in the EU — a balancing act which Mr. Blair, European diplomats say, will find more and more difficult.

Indian judge gets death threats over Gandhi murder report

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An Indian judge whose report on former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi felled the country's coalition government has received death threats, newspapers reported Sunday.

Milap Chand Jain has informed the home ministry that he and his family had been threatened by anonymous letters and phone calls, the Statesman said quoting official sources.

The government has stepped up security for Mr. Jain, the daily said.

Mr. Jain, who lives in New Delhi, could not be reached for comment. The Delhi police refused to give further details.

Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral's coalition government collapsed last month in the wake of a row sparked by a report from Mr. Jain linking an alliance member with Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas blamed for Gandhi's 1991 killing.

Mr. Jain had said in his report submitted to the government after a six-year investigation that the DMK party tacitly encouraged the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which has been blamed for the assassination.

The DMK, a member of Mr. Gujral's multi-party coalition, denied the charge. The Congress party took back its crucial legislative support to the minority government after Gujral refused to drop the DMK.

Mr. Jain has been widely flayed for alleged his "anti-Tamil" remarks in the report. Most newspapers and Indian experts have also dismissed his report as a mere compilation of published reports and unsubstantiated charges.

The report has also embarrassed New Delhi for revealing alleged Indian military training to Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas for several years beginning 1983.

The Statesman said one of the anonymous letters received by the judge warned "he would have to face the consequences" for his "anti-Tamil" report.

New Delhi meet urges Sri Lanka to talk to Tamil Tigers

NEW DELHI (AFP) — An "international" conference held here in defiance of a police ban Sunday called upon Sri Lanka to open peace talks with Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

The day-long meeting asked Colombo to negotiate with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to end a dragging Tamil separatist drive in the neighbouring island nation.

A resolution adopted by some 150 people, mainly Indian Tamils, at the meet also urged Sri Lanka to ban bombing and shelling Tamil areas, pull back troops from Tamil areas and "solve the national problem politically."

Another resolution denounced alleged U.S. military support to Colombo in its campaign against the LTTE, which is fighting for a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka's north and east.

Sunday's meeting was at the lawns of the house of a left-wing Indian politician, George Fernandes, after authorities refused permission

for it to be held in a conference hall.

The organisers said Yogan Mykles, an Australian of Sri Lankan origin, was detained at the airport here when he flew in overnight Saturday to take part in the meeting.

A handful of police were at the site before the conference opened but did not intervene.

The police Friday banned the meeting, citing "security reasons," and alleged the gathering had been funded by the LTTE, which was outlawed by New Delhi for allegedly assassinating former Premier Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

"I had not expected the government of India to behave in the manner in which it has," said Mr. Fernandes, a member of the outgoing Indian parliament as well as the chief organiser.

"The Indian government does not have a word to say about the fate of Tamils who are at the receiving end of state-sponsored terror in Sri Lanka," he said in an address. "There are very powerful interests in this country who

would not care whatever happens to the Tamils in Sri Lanka," he added. "The Tamils are seen as second-class citizens (in Sri Lanka)."

"The Tamils took to weapons in response."

Mr. Fernandes denied the conference was funded by the Tamil Tigers.

Joseph Paranjasingham, a moderate Sri Lankan Tamil parliamentarian, blamed Colombo for rampant human rights abuses.

"Human rights violations are very extensive in Sri Lanka," he said. "We (Tamils) are prepared to live together if we are given the same rights which are available to the majority community."

Others at the meeting were some Tamil politicians from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, divided from Sri Lanka by a narrow strip of sea, and two delegates from Australia and France.

Tamil Nadu, home to around 55 million Indian Tamils, was once used by the LTTE as a sanctuary.

Discord in NATO as new members prepare to join

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Three new members will be welcomed into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Tuesday, amid discord within the alliance over the admission of two more.

The 16 NATO states will sign an accord to admit the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland from 1999, pending ratification by the parliaments of all the countries concerned.

In the meantime the three newcomers must make a great effort to adapt their military structures and procedures to NATO standards, ranging from greater defence spending to a better level of English in their armed forces.

Poland has promised to incorporate the whole of its 248,000-strong army into the alliance, and to meet 2.48 per cent of the NATO budget, amounting to a little over \$1.5 billion in 1998.

But NATO has turned down a request from Warsaw to have a sub-regional command on Polish soil, because of an implicit agreement with Russia. Instead, the Polish army will come under the northern command, based at Brunsum in the Netherlands and headed by a German general.

The Czech Republic is to put 90 per cent of the 70,000 men in its armed forces under NATO command, and pay 0.9 per cent of the alliance's budget.

Hungary will make a similar contribution with regard to its 64,300 soldiers, and meet 0.65 per cent of the budget. Diplomats said, however, that the preparation of the official communiqué announcing Tuesday's accord reflected disagreements between southern and northern NATO countries over the eventual admission of Romania and Slovenia.

Supporters of the further enlargement, led by France and Italy, clashed with Britain and Germany, while the United States remained neutral for the time being.

Washington vetoed Romania and Slovenia when it was agreed at a NATO summit in Italy in July to invite the other three to join.

But the two states were mentioned in the final communiqué announcing a new examination of their candidacy at a summit in Washington planned for April 1999, the 50th anniversary of the alliance.

For the southern states, a reexamination of the case of Romania and Slovenia implies a new invitation to join, but the northern countries deny this.

Diplomats said that London and Bonn had opposed any modification of the July declaration. Their attitude, backed by Copenhagen and Oslo, was linked to the admission to NATO of the three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

A diplomat said that Denmark, Germany and Norway would have problems explaining to their public opinion a further rejection of the Baltic states in 1999, despite this being in the face of Russian opposition.

For this reason, they preferred to put off any further enlargement, the diplomat said.

Lip prints yield arrest of Peeping Tom

NEWPORT NEWS, Virginia (AFP) — A Peeping Tom got a bit too close to a woman's apartment window here, leaving behind a lip print that led to his arrest.

Robert Smith was arrested Tuesday based on the unusual evidence.

"They don't have the whirls and loops that fingerprints do. Instead, they are marked by many crevices and channels that form a kind of 'road map,'" said Paul

Ferrara, director of Virginia's Division of Forensic Science. "It's very rare," said FBI spokesman Steven Berry. "We've seen a couple of cases."

About two weeks after the lip prints were taken from a woman's apartment, another woman in the same apartment building complained that Mr. Smith had knocked on her door and started masturbating when she answered.

But that woman did not show up in court to face Mr. Smith. The case would have been thrown out were it not for the lip print evidence, police said.

A court warrant enabled police to obtain a lip print from Smith, which they then compared against the print found on the woman's window.

If convicted, Mr. Smith faces up to one year in prison.



A bus burns in Londonderry as violence broke out following a march by Protestant loyalist Apprentice Boys through the city centre (AFP photo)

Londonderry quiet after overnight rioting

LONDONDERRY, Northern Ireland (R) — The city of Londonderry returned to uneasy calm Sunday after a Catholic mob angered by a march by pro-British Protestants threw a thousand petrol bombs at police.

Council workers moved into the city centre to clear up the aftermath of a night of rioting which left an apartment store blackened by fire, two banks damaged and burnt-out stolen vehicles littering the streets.

The violence was the worst the province has seen since the Irish Republican Army declared a ceasefire in its battle to end British rule in July, allowing its political wing Sinn Féin to join multi-party talks on Northern Ireland's future.

It was triggered by an annual march by the Protestant Apprentice Boys Organisation which always leads to tension in the predominantly Catholic city.

A police spokesman said 169 anti-riot plastic bullets were fired to disperse gangs

who remained in the centre of the city until the early hours of the morning.

He said 13 arrests had been made, five policemen had been injured, and an 11-year-old boy was in hospital after being hit by a rock.

During the night, police in full riot gear gradually hemmed the rioters into the Catholic bogside area of the city. But they had to battle for a long time to stop the bail of petrol bombs which sent up clouds of acrid black smoke into the night air.

The police earlier mounted a huge security operation to keep the two sides apart, seeking to avert conflict provoked by the annual parade in which the Protestants, with British flags flying and headed by a succession of noisy bands, marched along their controversial route.

On what should have been a busy pre-Christmas Saturday, shops were deprived of business.

The annual Lundy's Day demonstration by the apprentice boys marks the shutting of the city's gates in the face of Catholic forces in 1688.

This led to a siege that cost thousands of Protestant lives and which Protestants have regarded as one of the defining moments in their history in the northern sector of the island.

As dusk falls on this day each year, the apprentice boys burn a 20-foot high effigy of Colonel Lundy, the governor of the besieged city who has gone down in Protestant lore as a traitor.

Northern Ireland has been plagued by sectarian clashes linked to tension over controversial parades for many years.

The annual Protestant marching season triggers passions on both sides and this summer after serious clashes in the town of Portadown, Protestant leaders called off parades across the province to defuse

feared communal violence.

Britain's new Labour government has set up a parades commission which it hopes will help to avoid future clashes by negotiating on sensitive issues such as the routing of marches well before they take place.

The multi-party talks have been recently showing some signs of progress.

Saturday David Trimble, leader of the main Protestant political party, the Ulster Unionists, surprised some observers by saying he did not rule out the possibility of a face-to-face meeting with Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams.

"We have seen actually in the past people who have forsaken terrorism and genuinely changed into democrats," Mr. Trimble told Irish Television.

"It takes time, but it has happened in the past. It is perfectly possible that Gerry Adams can follow that path. And in that sense, I do not rule this out. It is possible."

Family of jailed China dissident to seek parole

BEIJING (R) — The Family of jailed Chinese dissident Wang Dan will seek medical parole for the former student activist, whose health is deteriorating due to harsh prison conditions and freezing temperatures, his mother said Sunday.

"His condition will not improve because the weather is worsening," Wang Lingyun told Reuters. She said she had met her son Saturday at the Jinzhou prison in the northeastern province of Liaoning where temperatures have dropped to minus 10C.

"Prison conditions are harsh," she said. Mr. Wang, 28, a leader of student-led demonstrations for democracy that were crushed by the army with heavy loss of life in Beijing in 1989, was jailed for 11 years last year for subversion. He had previously served four years for his role in the protests.

Mr. Wang and his family have applied for his medical parole on several occasions, but the authorities have rejected their appeals.

The family will persist and appeal for Mr. Wang's parole. "We will not give up," his mother said.

"We will not stop applying for medical parole."

The dissident is suffering from throat and stomach problems.

In September Chinese Justice Minister Xiao Yang ruled out medical parole for Mr. Wang, saying he had no major illness and

could receive treatment in jail.

Mr. Wang appeared calm when he learned from his parents that fellow dissident Wei Jingsheng had been released on medical parole on Nov. 16 and forced into exile in the United States.

"He was calm, he wasn't surprised," his mother said.

"He said he was happy for Wei Jingsheng."

Mr. Wang and his family did not discuss Mr. Wei's release further because their 1-1/2-hour meeting was under surveillance.

The release of Mr. Wei, 47, came about just three weeks after a summit between Chinese President Jiang Zemin and U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington, where the two leaders sparred over human rights.

International human rights groups have called on China to release Mr. Wang as well.

Beijing regards criticism of its human rights record as interference in its internal affairs, arguing that feeding and clothing 1.2 billion people is more important than political rights.

Mr. Wang and his family have also applied for the dissident to be transferred to a prison in the Chinese capital to make it more convenient for his elderly parents to visit him.

Mr. Wang's parents have to travel 623 km or 18 hours by train every month to visit the dissident at the Liaoning prison.

Taiwan's opposition party divided over pragmatism

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan's main opposition party is struggling for a new identity after its recent stunning victory in local elections that tests the independence-leaning party's ability to rule and interact with powerful rival neighbour China.

But internal rifts over whether the Democratic Progressive Party should be pragmatic or take a radical route threaten to undermine hard-won gains, analysts and party officials said Sunday.

"If these internal squabbles cannot be resolved soon, it will not only affect the party's standing in its contest with the ruling Nationalist Party during the 1998 national elections but will also threaten a party split," said political scientist Hu Fu of National Taiwan University.

The party, formed illegally a year before the lifting of martial law in 1987, won its biggest victory in Nov. 29 local magistrate and mayoral elections, capturing 12 of the 23 constituencies.

The ruling Nationalists suffered their worst setback in party history, winning just eight. The rest went to independents, two of whom lean towards the Democratic Progressives.

Democratic Party Chairman Hsu Hsin-Liang, who had in the past two years tried to moderate the radical image of the party, said the victory proved the public had begun to accept the party.

"Our efforts have yielded fruit, and we will work hard to tell the public we are a better ruler than the nationalists," Mr. Hsu said shortly

after the elections.

Mr. Hsu suggested the public could find the Democratic Progressives more acceptable if the party could be more pragmatic.

Mr. Hsu's pragmatic attitude was reflected through his support of having direct links with China, a position that his party opponents had criticised as "pleasing and befriending" Beijing.

Mr. Hsu said in a recent visit to the United States that his party would not be a troublemaker in relations with China, that it would take a pragmatic approach to China and that would be cautious about calling a plebiscite on independence.

In a news conference in Taipei Sunday, Mr. Hsu said that as Taiwan needed to compete with China diplomatically and economically, it would not be advisable to unreasonably provoke Beijing.

China, which views Taiwan as a renegade province, has threatened to attack the island should it declare independence.

Mr. Hsu also said Sunday the party needed a more pragmatic industrial policy "for the sake of Taiwan."

"Otherwise, foreign investments would move out of Taiwan."

Mr. Hsu, from the relatively moderate Formosa faction, was referring to the recent controversy over the establishment of a chemical plant in the central county of Taichung by Germany's Bayer Group.

"We need to really consider the possible backlash from foreign investors," Mr. Hsu told fellow party members.

Mandela confirms merger talks with Buthelezi

JOHANNESBURG (R) — President Nelson Mandela, who retires Saturday as leader of South Africa's ruling party, said Sunday he had discussed a political merger with his main black rival, Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Mr. Mandela, 79, said in a live television interview the merger of his ruling African National Congress (ANC) and Mr. Buthelezi's traditional Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) would be "a very progressive development."

"It is in the interest of a country that has just crawled out from a painful past of tension, divisions, conflict and bloodshed that we should be able to pool our energies, our resources in order to be able to address these problems."

"I would welcome a merger between the IFP and the ANC as a first step to that unity which I would like to see," he said.

Mr. Mandela denied that Mr. Buthelezi had been

offered the post of deputy president after the next election in 1999, but said he would welcome the Zulu leader's appointment to the job.

He denied also that the proposed merger could set South Africa on a path to one-party rule, saying the structures of the ANC would guarantee democratic debate.

Based on the results of the country's first democratic elections in April 1994, a combined ANC-IFP party would have the support of about 75 per cent of the nation.

More than 20,000 people have died in the political turf war between the IFP and the ANC, which flared in 1985 and continues today.

Pressed by a panel of journalists conducting the interview, Mr. Mandela said he had first in 1991 discussed a merger with Mr. Buthelezi, who is his strongest black critic and a minister in his national

unity government.

"Since then we have had countless meetings in which we have discussed the question of violence, the question of unity. Yes, we have done so," he said.

Mandela's ANC won 62 per cent of the vote in 1994. Buthelezi's Inkatha abandoned an election boycott barely hours before the poll and managed to gather 10 per cent of the vote, which entitled the party to three cabinet seats.

Mr. Mandela denied that the possible merger would undermine South Africa's young democracy, saying the number of parties was not the only measure of political freedom.

"Democracy in our country means that each and everybody must be able to express himself or herself freely, without fear."

"Democracy does not mean a hundred political parties. It means that problems must be looked at from a holistic approach. "When the leadership of

an organisation surrounds itself with powerful and independent people who can criticise even the president of that organisation without fear, then you have democracy really functioning," he said.

Mr. Mandela dismissed the sacking of ANC critic Bantu Holomisa from the government and the party because he accused another minister of taking bribes, as a matter of essential discipline.

He did not comment on the recent public criticism of his former wife Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as a coward for her public criticism of the party's post-apartheid record.

"Quote me one organisation that has not expelled people in this country... An organisation can only carry out its mandate if there is discipline."

"Where there is no discipline, there can be no real progress in addressing the problems of a country," he said.

British scientists reportedly find planets around stars

LONDON (R) — British scientists using a revolutionary new camera have found what they believe is conclusive evidence of planets circling four of the stars closest to our solar system, a newspaper reported Sunday.

"It's planets. I've no doubt," the Observer quoted Wayne Holland, one of a team of scientists at Edinburgh's Royal Observatory who developed the camera as saying.

No astronomer was available at the observatory Sunday to confirm the Observer's report.

The newspaper said the new camera is cooled to within one-tenth of a degree of absolute zero, minus 273 Centigrade, enabling it to pick up faint heat emanations from gas and dust particles warmed by stellar radiation.

It has been mounted on the observatory's Maxwell telescope 4,000 metres above sea level on the Mauna Kea Mountain in Hawaii and used to probe four stars, Beta Pictoris, Fomalhaut, Epsilon Eridani and Vega.

These stars are all relatively young — about 200 million years old compared with several billion for our Sun — and are all within 24 light years from Earth.

The Observer said the scientists reported to Britain's Royal Astronomical Society at a meeting last week that each star was surrounded by a vast halo of dust, but the centre of the area was clear of material.

It quoted the leader of the survey team, Professor Ben Zuckerman of the University of California, Los Angeles, as saying there were a number of possible explanations — but planets were far the most likely.

Mr. Zuckerman said: "Radiation from the stars may have driven these particles deeper into space. However, easily the most convincing reason is that they have been swept clean by planets orbiting near each star."

The Observer said the discovery was bound to lead to speculation that planets were a common feature of our galaxy, making the existence of intelligent life within it much more probable.

Clinton may appoint Asian-American to acting post

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton may sidestep a nasty confrontation with Congress by appointing his controversial nominee for the nation's top civil rights post in an acting capacity, a Republican senator said Saturday.

Mr. Clinton was expected to announce Monday his decision to install Bill Lann Lee as head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division with a recess appointment, a rarely used manoeuvre that allows the president to fill a job requiring senate confirmation while congress is out of session.

But Sen. Orrin Hatch, the Utah Republican who chairs the judiciary committee and the leading opponent of Mr. Lee's nomination, suggested the White House was considering a compromise that could avert a political backlash.

"There is some indication the president may make him the acting head of the Civil Rights Division," Mr. Hatch

said on the CNN programme "The Capital Gang."

"If that's the case, certainly that would not be the same thing in the eyes of the senate that a recess appointment would be," he said.

Nominees appointed to acting positions do not require senate approval.

Mr. Hatch said if Mr. Clinton did make a recess appointment "it would be a direct slap at the senate" and predicted it would have a major impact on relations between the White House and Congress.

Mr. Hatch and other Republicans have objected to Mr. Lee's support for affirmative action programmes for women and minorities despite the nominee's protestations that he is "unequivocally opposed to quotas."

Mr. Lee's record, according to Mr. Hatch, showed that he was willing to use the threat of litigation against businesses or governments to achieve racial

quotas and preferences not allowed by law.

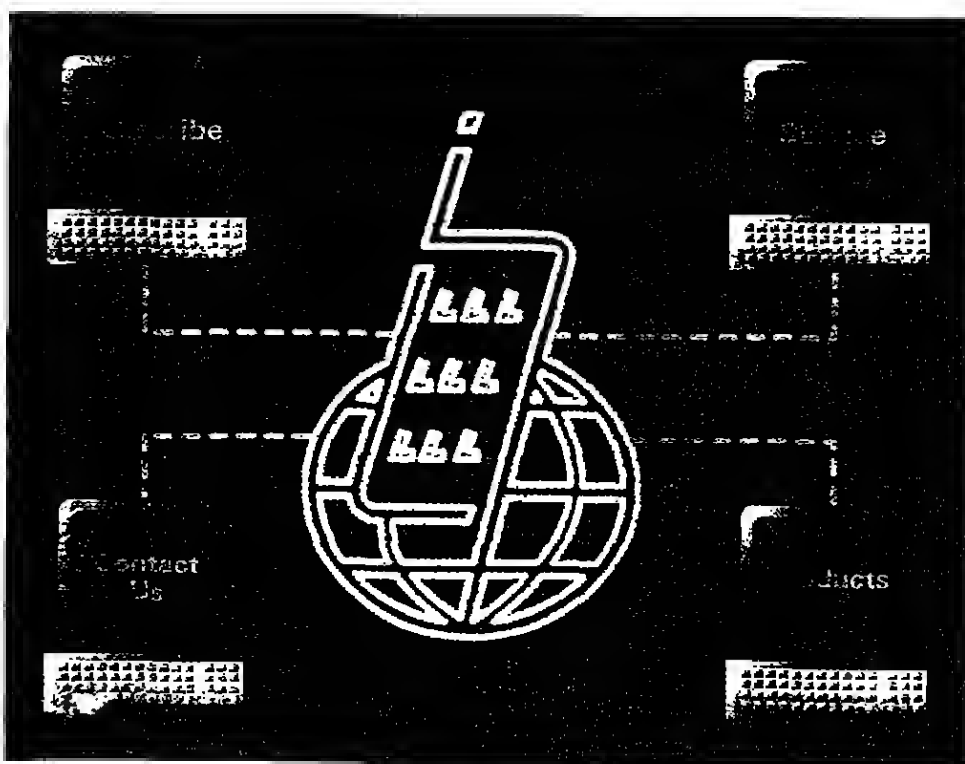
Mr. Clinton nominated Lee, a 48-year-old California lawyer for the NAACP, to the civil rights post in June. He would be the highest ranking Asian-American in the Clinton administration.

But Mr. Lee's nomination was blocked in the judiciary committee when it refused to hold a vote on the matter. Rhetoric over the issue escalated Friday when the White House made it known that Mr. Clinton planned to make a recess appointment with

spokesman Mike McCurry telling senators to avoid "lame-brained and stupid" retaliation.

Mr. Hatch said the president would be making "a serious mistake" and, in an interview with the New York Times published Saturday, threatened "remedies" ranging from blocking other Clinton administration nominees to freezing money for its programmes.

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Easterly winds of change

THE RELEASE of two Jordanian prisoners of war (POW) by the Iranian government on the occasion of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's participation in the 8th Islamic summit in Tehran last week was a clear signal of not only a thaw in relations between our two countries but also of significant political change in Iran itself. The immediate conclusion tells us that the improvement in ties between Jordan and Iran has not taken place in a vacuum. The slow but sure transformation within Iran from a revolutionary and radical power into a moderate Islamic state should, if carefully harnessed and cultivated, open the door for a new political era in the Middle East region as a whole.

The relative success of the Tehran summit promises the removal of Iran from the enemy list, as a threat to the Arab countries especially the Arab Gulf states. The Iranian leadership vowed during the conference that Iran would never wage war against an Islamic country. This pledge should reduce fears about increasing cooperation with Tehran as a truly friendly and peaceful neighbour. The winds of change that have swept Iran of late climaxed with the election of President Mohammad Khatami whose overwhelming victory symbolised the Iranian people's rejection of extremism and radicalism as a way of life and a matter of political course.

The strategic impact of this evolution in Iran is far-reaching. As Crown Prince Hassan commented recently, in an interview with the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat, there is no longer any justification for the U.S.-invented dual containment policy towards Iran and Iraq.

This necessarily entails a comprehensive reappraisal of Washington's stance vis-a-vis not only Iran but also on the American military posture and even presence in the Gulf region. Naturally such review of policy would be contingent on the Iranian regime showing continued and genuine moderation as represented by the rise to power of President Khatami.

For their part, all countries with stakes in the triumph of moderate forces in Iran need to exert every effort to lend support to this positive change. The hands of the president would surely be strengthened by a rapid reconsideration of regional and international perspectives on Iran under the current regime. Isolating it would have the opposite effect.

This probably explains the favourable impressions that the Crown Prince brought back with him from the summit. His Majesty King Hussein's invitation to Iran's supreme spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Khatami to visit Jordan is testimony to the fact that this and other countries should begin to do business with Iran. In due course, the Iranian chairmanship of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) over the next three years will tell us a great deal about whether the change in Iran is for real and show us the way to where we might head.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Mohammad Subeithi Sunday called for a comprehensive revision of Jordanian-Iraqi relations in light of the execution of four Jordanians last week in Iraq. The writer said that if the Iraqis want to maintain good relations with Jordan they should demonstrate respect for human rights and should arrange for fair trials of Jordanian citizens whenever they are accused of committing any offence. The Iraqi decision to release 140 Jordanian detainees from Iraqi jails and the reported commuting of the death sentence on a fifth Jordanian accused of smuggling clearly prove that the Iraqis could have spared the lives of the four Jordanians and could have re-examined their laws whenever the case involves Jordanians especially in view of the special relationship with Jordan and in recognition of the Jordanian people's sacrifices for Iraq, demanded the writer. He said Jordan expects from the Iraqi leadership that it treat Jordanians the same as Jordan treats Iraqi nationals living in the Kingdom.

Al Aswag's Yahya Mahmoud said the Islamic summit in Tehran attracted the attention of Muslim masses, and the speeches delivered during the meetings reflected ideal concepts about the way in which the Muslim World should act in order to achieve prosperity and protect its interests. But the Muslim leaders have obviously failed to come up with a mechanism or an executive programme for translating these ideas into action, he said. The writer said the Muslim leaders could have backed HRH Crown Prince Hassan's proposal for the creation of a world Islamic Zakat Fund which could offer aid to the millions of poor Muslims around the world or they could have approved his idea of creating an Islamic centre for settling disputes among Islamic countries. Above all, he said the Muslim leaders could have come up with a practical idea for safeguarding the Muslim holy places in Palestine and help the Palestinians to remain steadfast in their resistance of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The writer said unless practical steps are taken to translate the ideas into actions, the Islamic conference will be no more than a tool with which Muslim leaders can deceive their masses.

Economic Review

By Dr. Yusuf Mansur

No prosperity without peace

IN A recent conference on the creation of regional competitiveness, one of the main speakers was the ever-entertaining Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In his opening remarks he managed to put a damper on the whole conference. The thrust of his address was basically that peace was not necessary for prosperity. He was wrong, simply wrong.

The best working economic models preach that the role of government is to create a predictable and stable economic and political environment. (In fact the main speaker of the conference affirmed exactly that). Better still, there is almost universal agreement among economists and possibly among all rational people, for that matter, on this principle. But why does Netanyahu reiterate such nuances that betray a certain lack of analytical thinking and a tendency to accept superficial solutions? It is very plain that to Netanyahu peace is synonymous with security — a totally maligned premise.

To Netanyahu and his foreign relations adviser Uzi Arad, who stated a few weeks ago to the Financial Times that the notion of the economic benefits of peace is overrated, we say that they are mistaken. Peace is definitely necessary for prosperity and the security that only the short-sighted would embrace as a dream which will destroy the momentous prosperity achieved by Israel.

Peace does not only bring with it a

secure and predictable political and economic environment but also brings a sense of security and goodwill. The goodwill of neighbours means decreased spending on security and less of a police or military presence in the average life of every Israeli. One of the benefits of peace is the possibility of reducing security checks at Israeli airports and ports of entry — doing away with the two-hour security check at the airport. Ask any tourist who goes to Israel what bothers him/her the most and the answer is inevitably the security stoppages and the endless searches, together with barricades and military fatigues which colour the life of Israel. All these are not only deterrents to terror but also to longevity and a healthy sense of well-being. Their cost is not only in direct expenditures but also in lost lives, lost optimism and a feeling of never being secure. In addition, Israel has witnessed a departure of investment and tourism from the levels of 1994, 95 — already, the Israeli government spends more in marketing per tourist than any other government in the world with very little payoff. All that is needed to shatter the security myth is a singular act of human despair and the loss becomes stunning.

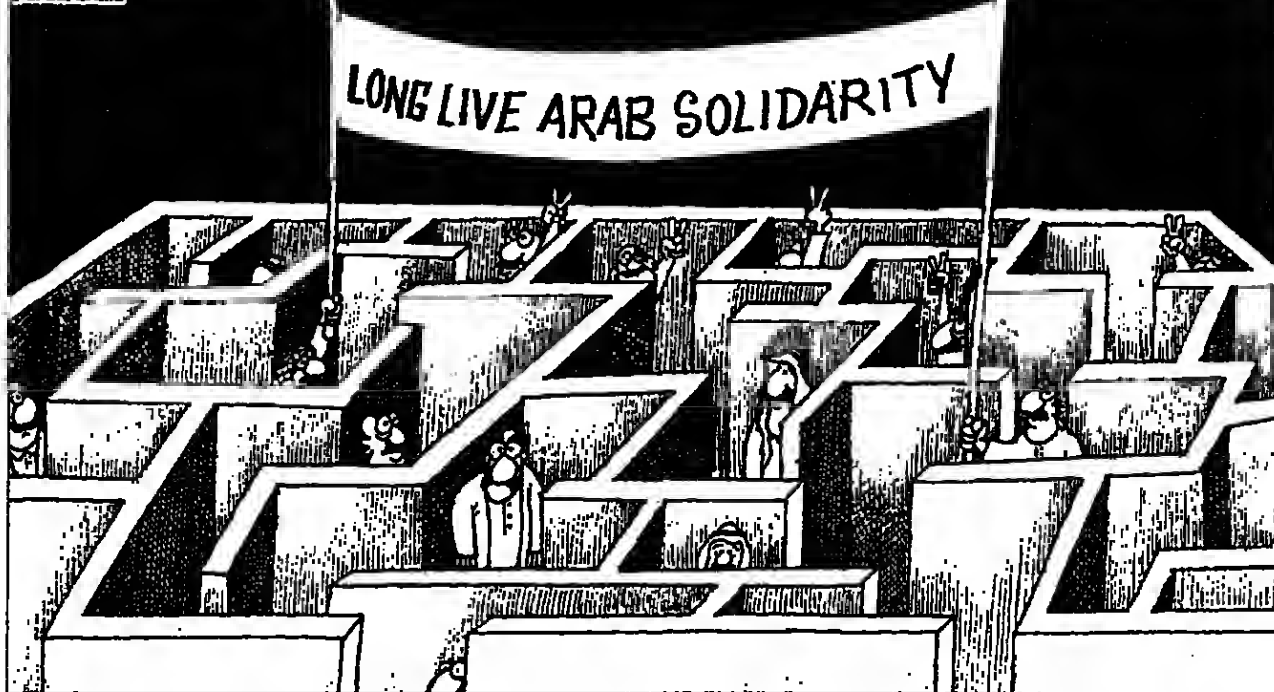
The mistake that has been repeatedly made by Netanyahu relates directly to his misunderstanding of the concept of peace. Another mistake is his confusion of prosperity with short-term economic gains.

(Despite this shortcoming, Netanyahu cannot claim any success in the short or long terms because his cabinet has been responsible for an ever-rising unemployment rate which went from a low of approximately 5 per cent to a high of 8.2 per cent — in two and a half years he managed to almost double the unemployment rate in Israel, not a small feat by any measure).

No matter how myopic the leadership is, short-term economic gains are not the prosperity that any nation must seek. What is required is a sustainable prosperity, not a fly-by-night windfall that perishes with the first whiff of disaster. The economic fundamentals must be right. For prosperity, therefore, there must be peace, and for our region there must be total peace because dissonance and imbalances spill over from one area into another — respecting human rights in one country will attract voices of dissent from elsewhere and create havoc in the place that is doing right. Peace must be total if prosperity is to be lasting or sustainable.

Yes, it may be difficult to convince the voices of no-reason that peace is a requirement not only for sustainable economic growth but also for existence; and it may be even more difficult to convince the seers of doom that true security lies, not in the bearing of arms but in the opening of arms. But then such is the price we must pay for a better tomorrow.

M. KAHIL



Democracy, pluralism essential to Arab progress

By Pascal B. Karmy

IN HIS well-known book "Preparing for the Twenty-First Century" Professor Paul Kennedy of Yale University says, in partly describing the condition of the Middle East: "Vicious one-man dictatorships glare threateningly at arch-conservative, anti-democratic, feudal sheikhdoms. Fundamentalist regimes exist from Iran to the Sudan. Terrorist groups in exile threaten to eliminate their foes. Unrest among the masses puts a question over the future of Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan. The recent fate of Lebanon, instead of serving as a warning against sectarian fanaticism, is more often viewed as a lesson in power politics, that the strong will devour the weak. To the Western observer brought up in Enlightenment traditions — or, for that matter, to economic rationalists preaching the virtues of the borderless world — the answer to the Muslim nations' problems would appear to be a massive programme of education, not simply in the technical, skill-acquiring sense but also to advance parliamentary discourse, pluralism and a secular civic culture. Is that not the reason, after all, for the political stability and economic success of Scandinavia or Japan today?" (pages 209 & 210).

In another place Kennedy observes: "It is difficult to know whether the reason for the Muslim World's troubled condition is cultural or historical. Western critics who point to the region's religious intolerance, technological backwardness, a feudal cast of mind, often forget that centuries before the Reformation, Islam led the world in mathematics, cartography, medicine, and many other aspects of science and industry, and contained libraries, universities and observatories when Japan and America possessed none and Europe only a few. These assets were later sacrificed to a revival of traditionalist thought and sectarian split between Shiites and Sunni Muslims. But Islam's retreat into itself — its being out of step with history was probably also a response to the rise of successful expansionist Europe" (pages 210-211).

Kennedy then goes on to somewhat put the blame for this Islamic retreat on European colonialism, dividing the Middle East along unnatural boundaries as part of a post World War I diplomatic bargain, developing American power to buttress and then replace European influence, inserting the Israeli state in the midst of Arab peoples, instigating coups against local popular leaders and usually indicating that this part of the globe was important only for its oil. The author adds: "Clearly Islam suffers many self-inflicted problems. But if much of its angry, confrontational stances towards the international order today is due to a long-held fear of being swallowed up by the West, not much in the way of change can be expected until that fear is dissipated" (page 211).

It seems that there is some coincidence of thinking or some meeting of minds between what Kennedy says and the statements of Al Sadeq Mahdi — a former prime minister of Sudan and well-respected Arab Muslim leader in the Muslim and Arab Worlds. In answer to questions addressed to him by the Jinnah Centre of Strategic Studies (published in Al Ra'i news, paper Sept. 24, 1997) he stated, inter alia: "The first problem in the Arab World is that the Arab peoples are 'colonised internally' if we consider the matter from the point of view of the division which existed in the world of Islam between Sunnis and the Shiites. The reason for this division is due to the fact that the Shiites look for an infallible Imam while the Sunnis consider him as a normal human being subject to questioning and accountability. At present the Arab governing political leaderships are like the infallible Shiite Imam who does not err, and all state organs are ready to prove his infallibility. We have no means to correct the wrong which the leader commits, and thus he acts as he wishes with no accountability for his acts."

On the other hand Mahdi says "Israeli people have the advantage of superior economic and military capabilities because they enjoy full freedom of opinion, legal rights and enjoy competitive and creative capabilities. But the Arab peoples are deprived of those rights and privileges. How can then a people whose hands are tied and shackled defeat a free people?" In Mahdi's opinion the most important factor which rendered the capabilities of our people stultified or ineffective is the infallibility of the political leadership and the governing of the people by "fire and iron." This is a great and substantial weakness which does not give any scope for competitiveness and creativity despite the fact that we are approaching the end of the 20th Century, Mahdi says.

It can be concluded from the above that democracy including pluralism should be applied in all Arab countries to enable the Arab peoples themselves to shape their destiny. Arab leaderships will thus be accountable for their acts and will not govern arbitrarily and despotically. Arabs should emulate the democracy and pluralism prevailing in the European states and elsewhere. Arab leaderships should listen to their public opinion as may be expressed in the media or in occasional polls. They must encourage the establishment of democracy, liberalism and respect for human rights.

It is only by those means that the Arabs can change the present gloomy picture of the Arab World as described by Kennedy and Mahdi. The Arabs can then achieve a bright and prosperous future, play an effective leading role in world political and economic affairs and renew their glorious past. Otherwise the Arab peoples will remain subservient to the more advanced liberal West which will consequently shape the Arab peoples' future and destiny.

Human Rights File

Iraq's grievous practice

By Waleed M. Sadi

AMONG THE tragic outcomes of the Iraqi execution of four Jordanians last week is that the Iraqi authorities responsible for the killings do not seem to comprehend that they are wrong. The Iraqi regime, it would appear, has lost touch with the international community, its standards and its norms. Baghdad's justification of the executions is as grievous as the act itself. How can a country entering the 21 century still seriously believe that death sentences handed down against Jordanians and the thousands upon thousands of other victims and carried out in cold blood can still be explained, much less vindicated.

It is fact that the ruling regime has a long record of unrestricted enforcement of capital punishment even though the country has virtually signed and ratified every international human rights instrument and prides itself as being in the forefront of the states which support the international codification of human rights. For the government in Iraq to know even try to explain its repeated executions of people for alleged economic crimes is, at the very least, shocking. Such incidents as occurred last week are indicative of the extent of loss of contact with civilisation and even common sense. At a time when Iraq is appealing for international compassion and understanding for the plight of its suffering people, the taking of lives of Jordanians and others in utter disregard for international standards is bewildering. It is as if the Iraqi regime seeks to hurt itself and willfully damage its own image.

There are all sorts of ways to respond to this cycle of violence in Iraq. But the path chosen to react in a meaningful way to Iraq's use of capital punishment must not serve to punish the Iraqi people as well. As His Majesty King Hussein has stated in the wake of the executions, we must at all costs avoid adding to the sufferings of the Iraqi people. For starters, we should have sounded the alarm long before Jordanians were executed. The Iraqi regime has been liberally applying capital punishment for crimes that cannot be deemed serious enough to justify it. The international community has made great strides to phase-out capital punishment altogether even when the most heinous crimes are committed. Iraq and a few other states stand on the opposite end of this new international trend.

Of the dozen or so countries which continue to hand down death sentences, none has been put under international scrutiny or subjected to any form of sanctions. Gross human rights violations are not being seriously pursued, and when they are, the examination of such systematic violations is not conducted in an evenhanded way. Friends and allies of major countries are often helped out when an international organisation undertakes a study of their human rights records. On the other hand, enemies of powerful countries are pursued with a vengeance. This continuing double standard is the main culprit for the failure of the human rights cause around the globe.

What possible effective compensation can the families of the victims seek from Baghdad. For starters, the Iraqi regime must be called upon to renounce capital punishment altogether. It must be asked to make a solemn public pronouncement to this effect and amend its laws accordingly. The ruling regime must also be requested to give full faith and credit to all its human rights treaty obligations.

LETTERS

Timely call

To the Editor:

THE CALL for both International Zakat and an Islamic Conflict Resolution Center by HRH Crown Prince Hassan could not come at a more crucial time. With all of the starving Muslims in the world, many as a result of wars waged against them, an International Zakat organisation could better handle needs while serving to unite the Muslim Nation. Likewise the Conflict Resolution Center, an idea that is overdue, and that might have been able to prevent the deaths of the four Jordanians.

Many of us here in the United States have supported the humanitarian lifting of the sanctions for the good of the Iraqi people, is it coincidence or what, that everytime Iraq seems to be on the verge of breaking through, it shoots itself in the foot with another act of stupidity. I sincerely hope that Crown Prince Hassan will undertake the same kind of effort as the Canadians did in their support of the Land Mine Treaty, to push for the establishment of both the International Zakat Fund, and the Islamic Conflict Resolution Center. He is to be commended for both of these recommendations.

Shella B. Cassidy
 Riverside, California

For those who doubted

To the Editor:

WHEN DROVES of Iraqis, now estimated at three million, decided to leave their country and search for a new identity, many found refuge in Jordan's civilised and hospitable atmosphere. These Iraqis realised that it was not only their livelihood that was at stake, but their lives and dignity as human beings. When Iraqis explained their plight here in Jordan, it fell on doubting ears, as many people here in Jordan have a very misguided fascination with the regime in Baghdad which is mostly based on mere fantasy. Many of these people, may now be shocked into realising what the beleaguered Iraqis were talking about.

When the regime in Baghdad decided to snuff out the lives of four young Jordanians for an offence that could have warranted only a minor sentence, people here in Jordan were in a state of disbelief that such brutality could be possible. They do not know that such cruelty and disregard for human feeling and human lives and the flouting of the most basic of human rights has been common practice under the present regime for close to three decades. The tragedy of the four young Jordanians is only a small dose of what the Iraqis have been suffering for a long time. I wonder what the supporters of the so-called "eternal mission" here in Jordan are thinking. We Iraqis living here in Jordan thank our lucky stars that we are here and not there!

Name withheld upon request

Deputy 'vote of confidence' statements

Following are highlights of speeches given by some Lower House of Parliament members on Sunday:

Mohammad Badri
(Aqaba)

"FREEDOM, in its comprehensive sense and its interpretation by intellectuals, is in the final analysis based on knowledge in its overwhelming concept.

"There can be no freedom without knowledge, thought, and research, because freedom is based on real knowledge rather than on the gathering of unrealistic information.

"Man is free to make his choices based on laws and terms of reference.

"Our exercise of democracy is an exercise of freedom in accordance with the rules of knowledge. We build on this solid ground in our endeavour to pass legislation that can further enhance the freedom of citizens and boost services."

Mohammad Al Zawahreh
(Zarqa)

"I speak here in my own name and on behalf of my colleagues, members of the National Bloc: Ziyad Shweikh, Mohammad Abu Hadeib, Saleh Shawata, Nawaf Kharwaldeh, Ra'd Al Bakri, Riad Daoud, Walid Ouhjan, and Mohammad Rafat.

"I put forth the following points:

1. Since the new modern elections law is to be enacted to help Jordan in the coming 21st century, the government ought to shed

light on its general themes.

2. In order to enact the political parties law, the government ought to involve the various parties and national forces in drafting it.

3. The government must clarify its position with regard to the trade unions and should look into the prospect of involving the representatives of these unions in the preparation of the draft of the law.

4. We wish to hear the government's reply to the question of a national health insurance plan and health care system. This project is of concern to the public and has become an overwhelming public demand.

5. We would like to hear the

government's views on the manner in which it intends to prevent corruption in the judiciary.

6. We would like to hear the government's views on women's rights and how to highlight the role of women to conformity with the provisions contained in His Majesty King Hussein's Speech from the Throne."

Ghazi Obeidat
(Ramtha and Bani Kananah)

"Tribalism is a national institution that should be safeguarded, because it reflects the image of Jordanian society and its solidarity and does not contravene society's civic institutions in any way.

"I hope that the concepts of democracy will be enhanced with regard to respecting the views of other people, political

pluralism, the public's participation in the decision-making process, and rotating authority, taking into consideration Jordan's principled stands and the Kingdom's special status.

"Democracy does not mean that one can minimise the country's achievements or paint an image of the country as unruly and unbound by laws.

"Trade unions should focus their attention on their own professions and trade. If someone wants to work to politics, he or she can do that through political parties."

Abdul Ra'ouf Rawabdeh
(Irbid)

"This speech expresses the views of the Wifaq Bloc, which comprises the following deputies: Rashed Baraiseh,

Mohammad Thweib, Abdul Ra'ouf Rawabdeh, Kamel Omari, Mahmoud Kharabsheh, Hasem Waked Faouri, Abdul Hadi Majali, Naief Kreishan, Sidqi Shabatat, Ali Abu Arijeh, Mifteh Ruheimi, Abdullah Jazi, and Daifullah Sarhan.

"The Palestine question is our central issue and so we will continue to back the Palestinian cause to the greatest possible extent to help them regain the occupied Arab territories and establish an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian national soil with Jerusalem as its capital.

"Studies have shown that Jordan's macro-economy is witnessing a clear and steady improvement. But despite these indications, we feel that the economy is facing a serious recession, about which everybody, including the limited and low-income groups, has been complaining.

"We demand that the government work out a strategy in which various specialised and concerned sectors can participate, a strategy that can guarantee sustainable, balanced, and comprehensive development.

"Democracy is the most exemplary way for people to exercise sovereignty, with the government reflecting the public's will and views. It should not

be monopolised by any group.

"We call for enhancing public freedoms within a framework reflecting a balance between responsible freedom and equality. We demand that the government pursue the process of modernising laws governing public freedoms, including the Elections Law, the Political Parties Law, and the Press and Publications Law.

"We call on the government to uphold the judiciary, offer incentives to judges, and improve and simplify judicial procedures.

"We also call for the development of educational policies and programmes to serve the country's needs.

"The role of women in society has been continually promoted. We express our appreciation for their role and we believe that this role should be supported to enable women to offer more services to Jordanian society.

"We call for increasing women's contributions in the workforce, fighting all forms of discrimination against women, opening the door for qualified women to assume leading positions, and amending legislation that has been restricting women's rights."

(More statements will appear in tomorrow's issue)

Deputies demand Cabinet explanation

(Continued from page 1)

Parliament's inaugural session held on Nov. 29 in line with the Constitution.

But many deputies expressed concern that the Speech did not spell clear policies on how the government planned to cope with Jordanians' day-to-day concerns, hence limiting their abilities to evaluate state programmes.

"I was hoping the government would present us with a policy statement in which it explained its policies by outlining to the members of the Lower House and to our citizens the sketches it laid out to execute these policies, but instead the Cabinet opted to

hide behind His Majesty's Speech from the Throne," Deputy Ghazi Fayez (Southern Badia) said.

He added that this prevented deputies from constructively criticising the government's political statement, its policies, practices, composition and its capability in accomplishing reforms and achievements.

The Islamist-led opposition and Dr. Majali had been at loggerheads since he took over in March while Parliament was in recess to help supervise the Nov. 4 general elections, the first since Jordan signed its 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

The crisis in ties forced the opposition to boycott the vote to protest the diminishing political

role of Parliament and what they said was a regression in the overall state of public freedoms in the country. Tribal leaders and pro-government figures won 64 of the seats in the vote.

Officials said Dr. Majali is expected to introduce a minor reshuffle to the Cabinet after winning the House's confidence. At least 55 of the 80 deputies are expected to vote in favour of Majali's 24-member team, analysts and deputies said.

They did not rule out the inclusion of several deputies in the Cabinet, especially after King Hussein said in a speech on Saturday he saw no problem in carrying dual portfolios.

Expelled Iraqi diplomats leave Wednesday

(Continued from page 1)

from Iraq so far.

For the past three days, King Hussein has used heavily worded statements to condemn the move and to stress that Jordan could not care less if Iraq reacted to his criticism by cutting oil supplies to the Kingdom.

Jordan depends entirely on Iraq for its daily needs of 75,000 barrels of oil a day under a special permit from the United Nations to get around across-the-board sanctions.

King Hussein's string of anti-Iraq remarks were the toughest since he called for change in Iraq after he gave asylum to top Iraqi defectors in August 1995 — when ties hit their lowest level in years.

Jordanians said Iraq's actions were a betrayal of its friendship, highlighted by their support to

Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in August 1990, sparking the Gulf crisis.

Jordanian and Amman-based Iraqi officials said over the weekend that both countries were in contact to help win the release of 140 Jordanian detainees held by Baghdad.

Iraq has also promised Jordan to commute the death sentence imposed on the fifth Jordanian, government officials said.

Wednesday's decision to expel the seven Iraqi diplomats was Jordan's second move against the Iraqi embassy in less than two years. In August 1996, Jordan ordered the expulsion of three Iraqi diplomats on charges of "performing activities against diplomatic norms."

U.S. Middle East Special Envoy Martin Indyk, to Amman for talks on the deadlocked Middle East peace process, also condemned the

executions.

"We are absolutely opposed to the executions of these Jordanians," Mr. Indyk told reporters after talks with Dr. Tarawneh.

"We condemn it to the strongest possible terms. We see this as just another example, unfortunately, of the brutality of Saddam Hussein and his regime," he said.

"We have seen similar actions before. On behalf of the U.S. government, we express our condolences particularly to the families of these four students."

He said Washington would do its utmost to help Jordan if Iraq halted oil supplies to the Kingdom.

"The United States is Jordan's ally and obviously we will contribute what we can to help," Mr. Indyk said.

Palestinians welcome Farrakhan

(Continued from page 12)

on the visit, said spokesman Richard Scorza.

In Ramallah, Mr. Farrakhan, clad in a dark suit and his trademark bow tie, lunched with Palestinian cabinet ministers and legislators. Afterward, travelling by bus with an entourage of about 50 people, he arrived in Gaza city for a meeting with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

The sudden visit caused consternation among Israeli officials, who had not been expecting Mr. Farrakhan for another

month, and were distracted by a contentious cabinet debate over a troop-pullback plan for the West Bank.

Israel has not been enthusiastic about a visit by Mr. Farrakhan, who once referred to Judaism as a "gutter religion." However, government spokesman, David Bar-Ilan, said Mr. Farrakhan, as a U.S. citizen, did not need any special permission to enter the Jewish state.

Mr. Farrakhan had contacted Israel's embassy in Washington earlier this year, saying he wanted to meet with high-level offi-

cials during his visit, Israeli officials said.

A meeting will be held to determine whether senior officials would meet with Mr. Farrakhan, the ministry said.

"We demand that he retract his statements concerning Jews, the Jewish religion, the state of Israel and terrorism," said ministry spokesman Aviv Shir-on. "Anybody who reads those statements knows them to be harsh and insensitive."

Mr. Farrakhan said he hoped to visit Jerusalem and pray at the Al Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites.

Turkey rejects invitation to attend conference

(Continued from page 12)

membership.

"We seek a negotiation process for full membership without any preconditions attached," Mr. Yilmaz said.

In a summit meeting Saturday, the European Union opened the doors to former Western foes to Eastern Europe, but shunned Turkey, a long-time NATO ally, citing serious human rights problems, its territorial dispute with Greece and its economic woes.

In an effort to appease the Turks, the EU came up with a series of annual conferences to bring the 15 EU members together with 11 eligible candidates and Turkey.

The first European conference was set for March.

Turkey had long feared that, as a Muslim country, it would

be pushed to the sidelines despite being faithful NATO allies to Western Europe throughout the cold war and giving crucial support in the Gulf war against Iraq.

Mr. Yilmaz warned the European Union that its decision to open membership talks with Cyprus would block a solution for the divided island and that Turkey would respond by strengthening political and economic relations with Turkish Cypriots once the EU opens negotiations with the Greek Cypriots in April (see separate story).

"This process to develop political ties with the inclusion of defence issues between Turkey and Turkish Cypriots will be speeded up by April," Mr. Yilmaz said.

While ignoring a question on whether Turkey would move towards integration with the Turkish Cypriot side, Mr. Yilmaz said: "The EU carries the responsibility for all negative developments on the Cyprus issue."

Iran supports the Lebanese Hizbollah, which is fighting a guerrilla war against Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon, and has also defended activist groups like Hamas. Tehran considers both groups, which are on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist movements, to be freedom fighters.

President Khatami also expanded on the "Islamic civil society" he has pushed since taking office — praising women, the rule of law and

respect for human rights.

"I am seriously pursuing efforts to make sure the rights of people in Iran are protected," said Mr. Khatami.

"Within the law people have rights, and nobody has the right to deny them that right. Definitely there is much we can borrow from the West on this, even their type of civil society," he said.

And he defended the status

of women, who have been forced to cover themselves from head to toe in public since 1979.

"We don't want male chauvinism nor female chauvinism. We want merit to rule... The perception that women are the second sex is very dangerous. Women are the first sex and they can achieve very senior positions," he said.



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Turkish Cypriots vow to 'integrate'

(Continued from page 12)

Greek," he said.

For his part, Mr. Clerides said there must be only one Cypriot delegation, the Cyprus News Agency CNA reported.

"We never denied [Turkish-Cypriot] participation in the Cypriot delegation, under the auspices of the Republic of Cyprus' delegation," Mr. Clerides said in Luxembourg.

Although the EU calls for Turkish-Cypriot participation, the Luxembourg statement falls short of setting this as a condition for the negotiations, which are due to be launched on March 30.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkish troops occupied the north in 1974 in response to a coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the island with Greece.

The Turkish Cypriots declared an independent Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983, but it is recognised only by Ankara.



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OECD: Asian markets turmoil may cut growth in industrial world by one percentage point

PARIS (R) — The OECD, in a key economic forecast, predicts that the current Asian markets turmoil could cut growth in the world's major developed economies by as much as one percentage point.

It said Japan's economy is stuck in a rut, and few could tell reliably from one day to the next what is happening to its beleaguered Asian neighbours.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in a report intended for publication on Dec. 17, said the crisis which has snowballed since Thailand's economy ran amok in July was hurting Asia, but the outlook remained bright for the United States and Europe.

The OECD has agreed to early release of its overview report following breach of the publication embargo by another news organisation. Individual country reports and tables remain embargoed.

The Paris-based agency, whose membership spans 29 countries, said the troubles in Southeast Asia could potentially knock one percentage point off OECD growth, with Japan and others in the region bearing twice as much of the pain as the United States.

In its twice-yearly economic outlook, the organisation cut its Japanese growth forecast for the second time in a month, putting 1997 growth at around 0.5 per cent, a far cry from the 2.3 per cent it

predicted as recently as June.

Japan's woes were due as much to internal difficulties as to any domino impact from the wider crisis in Asian financial markets and economies.

It also said gross domestic product (GDP) in the world's second largest economy was likely to grow by just 1.7 per cent in 1998, down from a forecast of 2.9 per cent GDP growth in Japan which the OECD made in its previous economic outlook six months ago.

And it acknowledged that things were changing so fast amid the financial turmoil elsewhere in Asia that its forecasts for South Korea, the latest Asian "tiger" to require international rescue after Thailand and Indonesia, were no longer reliable.

South Korea, which has just had to resort to a \$57 billion rescue arranged by the International Monetary Fund yet has still failed to shake the investor panic which is strangling its economy, is the most recent country to join the OECD.

Despite this, the Paris-based OECD said that the United States could count on healthy 2.7 per cent growth in 1998 and that the outlook was improving in the 15-nation European Union (EU), with EU growth seen at 2.8 per cent in each of the next two years.

Germany should see a rise of 3.0 per cent in GDP

next year, France a rise of 2.9 per cent, Italy 2.1 per cent and Britain 2.2 per cent, says the OECD report, which is based on information gathered up until mid-November.

EU unemployment, however, looks set to remain "very high," above 10 per cent, the report said, adding there was a need to tackle structural unemployment.

U.S. unemployment, which has recently dropped to its lowest level in nearly a quarter of a century, could start creeping up again as the pace of economic expansion slows, but this was likely to lead to a "mild reversal," it said.

Despite the relatively upbeat picture of 2.9 per cent growth for the entire OECD, the organisation said it had carried out a simulation exercise which showed the Asia crisis could knock close to one percentage point off GDP in 1998.

The OECD, which said the simulation exercise should be read with great caution, estimated the potential GDP loss would be far bigger in Japan and other countries with greater trade ties in Southeast Asia than in the United States or European Union.

While the fallout could knock 1.4 percentage points off Japanese growth in 1998, the simulation showed U.S. growth hit to the tune of 0.7 points and that in the EU down by 0.8 points.

Asians may be 'allergic' to IMF's 'Panadol'

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — International Monetary Fund (IMF) prescriptions for East Asia's ailing economies have failed to improve the situation and the region has to boost trade and take other steps to address the problem, Malaysia said Sunday.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told journalists ahead of a summit meeting of 12 Southeast Asian nations, many of them ravaged by falling currencies and market turmoil, that "maybe you cannot give Panadol to everybody," using the brand name of a popular painkiller.

"Maybe some are allergic to it, that the illness becomes worse," he told journalists.

"There is still a role for the respective countries to do whatever they could to improve the economic situation."

He said IMF prescriptions — typically involving austerity measures in exchange for emergency funds — did not appear to be working as well in Asia as they did in Mexico and other debtor countries hit by financial turmoil.

Association of South-east Nations (ASEAN) groups Brunei, Burma, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The three-day summit here also involves China, Japan and South Korea.

Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea have all received IMF rescue

packages collectively exceeding \$100 billion after they succumbed to the pressures of sharp currency devaluations beginning in Thailand in July.

"I cannot imagine that our leaders would go away after the summit without saying anything, expressing their views on the currency situation," Mr. Abdullah said, adding that despite IMF help, "the situation has not improved."

"This I think is a matter of great concern," he said. "I think we would expect to see a more concerted effort by ASEAN countries to deal with the present crisis."

Malaysia has called for increased trade among ASEAN countries, most of whose currencies have fallen sharply against the U.S. dollar since July. This has made imports from the United States and other hard-currency countries much dearer.

"We must continue to source materials for economic development. Development cannot come to a standstill. Our needs have to be looked after," the Malaysian foreign minister added.

A Thai government spokesman said after talks between Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and his Thai counterpart Chuan Leekpai that Bangkok would stand by its commitments to the IMF.

"The IMF probably underestimated the problem when they came in," Thai spokesman Akapol

Sorasuchart said, denying that Thailand had imposed a debt moratorium as had been suggested in the press.

"That would only happen if it was government debt, and most of the debt in Thailand is private," he added.

"We are under the IMF programme but we have nothing to complain about at the moment," the spokesman added.

"Measures have been taken to close down troubled financial institutions. Thailand is still trying to comply with IMF conditions and is not renegotiating any terms. Internally, the situation is stabilised," he said.

"It is the effects from outside that have hurt Thailand a bit more," the spokesman said, referring to last week's sharp fall of the Indonesian rupiah, which brought down other ASEAN currencies, after President Suharto cancelled his attendance at the summit.

With Japan also experiencing domestic financial woes, China, with its relatively closed financial markets, is the only country at the summit spared from currency turmoil.

Mr. Abdullah warned, however, that if China experiences similar trouble, "the problem will be very big."

"I think it is not only those in the neighbourhood that will be affected. I think even those countries far away will be affected," he said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES

(March 21 to April 19) Its good time to shop. Race over and grab the best bargains first thing this morning. You could be finished in time for a lunch date with your sweetheart. Do what he or she wants for the rest of today. That will rack up even more points in your favour.

TAURUS

(April 20 to May 20) Travel looks good, with family, friends, children and loved ones. You're lucky, too, in more ways than one. You may be stressed about money, but what you lack in that department, you more than make up for with the love of the people around you. You're a very wealthy person.

GEMINI

(May 21 to June 21) You're going to be hustling and bustling, taking care of other people, making sure they're well served and comfortable. It's the perfect day for entertaining guests. You're in a marvellous mood to fuss over people. Make them your top priority.

CANCER

(June 22 to July 21) You are in the mood to learn. You're steady, solid and dependable. That's great, because there are changes going on. Your willingness to state how things are going to be and stick to it is appreciated. You're providing a stable environment in the midst of change.

LEO

(July 22 to August 21) You may want to take it easy. You're still in a good mood, but a little tired. There are practical matters to be decided. Get that out of the way this afternoon. Decisions may then turn out well for you. Tomorrow you won't want to do anything but party.

VIRGO

(August 22 to September 21) There are people coming into your personal space, and they're in a festive mood. They may disrupt things, and you might be getting frustrated. Your sweetheart understands, however. Discuss it in private later tonight. You'll find a solution.

LIBRA

(September 22 to October 21) You need to be careful with your resources. You have plenty of money, but if you go shopping, that may not be true for long. If that's your plan, you'd better come up with another source of revenue. You're going to need it soon.

SCORPIO

(October 22 to November 21) You're much stronger than everyone else today. There is still a conflict between you and how much money you make, but that's getting resolved. Meanwhile, work together with friends on a project you care passionately about. You could push it right over the top.

SAGITTARIUS

(November 22 to December 21) If you want to make a dream come true, keep it to yourself a while longer. You don't have quite enough money saved up yet, but it's coming. If you shop carefully today, you can stretch it even further. You don't have to tell how much these gifts cost, either.

CAPRICORN

(December 22 to January 20) The people you love the most can help you make a big decision this morning. Think about it, interview others, then use your own best judgement. Your decision will be a good one. Not only do you have your experience to rely on, but you've done the homework. Besides, you're just downright lucky.

AQUARIUS

(January 21 to February 19) If your boss wants to know where the work is, answer that your commie is working on it. Use the group as a temporary shield. You won't need to for long. You're about to have a breakthrough, which will allow everything to be done on time.

PISCES

(February 20 to March 20) This is a good day for travel. Visit your partners or some other older people. You might make contact with a friend you haven't seen in ages. Meanwhile, contribute part of your allowance to a friend who will do the shopping for you. He or she is better at it than you are.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

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Mahathir urges trimming high salaries

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohamad pushed the private sector to trim high salaries now paid to its senior executives in the wake of the current economic turmoil, reports have said.

"One reason for a company's high operating costs is excessive salaries for top and middle-rung staff, like engineers fresh from university," Mr. Mahathir was quoted as saying by Bernama news agency.

The prime minister also urged the private sector not to accommodate demands by officers or executives, like engineers, for salaries twice or triple the normal rate. Anwar Ibrahim, the deputy

premier, last week said the government would cut the salaries of ministers and senior government officers as part of austerity measures to instill confidence in the financial system.

Mr. Mahathir chided professionals who are fresh graduates for fixing their "worth" well in advance of accepting private sector job offers.

"They determine what should be paid to them," the prime minister said.

Since the depreciation of the Thai baht on July 2, the Malaysian ringgit has shed almost 48 per cent against the dollar while 50 per cent of the stock market's capitalisation has been wiped out.

Mr. Mahathir also said that

the government would investigate the reasons and causes of price increases of consumer goods.

"I want to know the rea-

sons," he said, adding that the government may be compelled to enact laws to prevent certain groups from profiteering.

Chantilly
CHOCOLATIER

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Campus soldiers' grp.
- Crow calls
- Encourages in wrongdoing
- Bryce Canyon's state
- Spoken
- Page number
- Masculine
- Greek salad requirement
- Tropical vine
- Crest
- Heavyweight on the ivories
- Familiar kin
- Leveling device
- Oug the garden
- Lower or under
- Scatter
- Mild oeth
- Hindu music
- Heavy ending indication
- Major or minor constellation
- Gymnast Korbut
- Sees shot
- Charles, the actor
- First N.T. book
- Per (for each day)
- Impatient interjections
- Weighty singer
- Niagara's source
- Hang in loose folds
- Stop up
- Plummeted
- Minute amounts
- Big foot's size
- Allow ending?
- Water boundary
- First name in mysteries
- Western art colony
- COWN
- Cuban dance
- Nickelodeon port
- Grackle's scratcher
- Talk of weighty matters?
- Colombian export
- Envoys
- Power units
- Sword stroke
- Burning
- Heat to vaporization
- Altime to Tel Aviv
- Pitchfork element
- Ride theme's
- Given to empty talk
- Ovenports location
- Wooded valley
- Get lean
- Mandilкова of tennis
- Farm produce
- Skin eruption
- Framework post
- Shortened preposition
- Gather strength
- Comic's bit
- Genesis man
- Paiglaaci
- Mach+ jets
- Most unusual
- Longest distance to the moon
- Awards honcho
- Bannister or Coe, e.g.
- Sports venue
- Radio response to "roger"
- Smashing Monica
- Bank security letters
- End of a buck?
- See-ya!
- Health resorts
- Christmas carol

Peanuts

IN A MINUTE, CHALICE, I'M WONDERING WHAT TO DO — I'VE BURNT THE BOTTOM OUT OF ONE OF FLO'S BEST PANS.

OPENING TIME, ANDY!

NO PROBLEM, ANDY.

I'LL THROW IT IN ANY PLASTER, THEN WHEN SHE GETS HOME SHE WON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO IT.

HE'S NOT AS DAF AS HE LOOKS.

Andy Capp

Dear Ben, I did you get my last letter?

HOW DOES SHE KNOW IF THE LETTER SHE GOT WAS YOUR LAST LETTER?

AND IF SHE DOESN'T GET THIS LETTER, HOW WILL SHE KNOW YOU ASKED HER IF SHE GOT YOUR LAST LETTER?

Mutt'n'Jeff

YOU KNOW, JEFF, WE'RE A COUPLE CALLED GUNS! WE JUST WROTE UP AN ACT AND GO ON THE STAGE!

THE CURTAIN GOES UP AND I COME OUT AND SING!

THE CURTAIN COMES DOWN! THE CURTAIN GOES UP AND I DANCE, DOWN CURTAIN! UP CURTAIN! IT'S ME AGAIN!

HEY! WHAT ABOUT ME!

PAUL, THAT CURTAIN DON'T GO UP AND DOWN BY ITSELF!

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

GLASBERGEN

My favorite picture was taken when I had a tiny waist and thin thighs. Actually, it's a sonogram.

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

A new record This makes me feel good

LOPNY

TAUDI

GINOUT

TIFFUL

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: FELON JULEP BUTTON EFFACE
Answer: She doesn't drink coffee because it's NOT HER CUP OF TEA

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Ministry of Health authorities increase the prices of locally-produced medicines

GOVERNMENTAL DRUGSTORE and pharmaceutical association sources have confirmed that the Ministry of Health and Medical Care has raised the prices of locally-manufactured medicines noting that the increase includes medicines registered before 1989. The sources said the prices were raised according to the following rates:

- 1) Medicines which cost less than JD1 were increased by 50 per cent.
- 2) Drugs priced at less than JD2 were raised by 30 per cent.
- 3) Medicines that cost less than JD3 were increased by five per cent.

International companies express interest to become strategic partners with JAMPCO

A PRELIMINARY agreement has been reached between the Jordan Agricultural Marketing and Processing Company (JAMPCO) and six international food industries which will be submitting offers for strategic partnership with JAMPCO. The French, Dutch, Moroccan, Hungarian and two Spanish companies will include in their offers the financial and technical contribution, JAMPCO Director General Khalid Al Nasser said.

Mr. Nasser indicated that the focus would be on benefiting from the qualified cadres at those firms to manage the production and manufacturing as well as the packing and international marketing under the commercial names of the companies in addition to the commercial names under which JAMPCO markets its products.

The director general highlighted the Jordan tomato paste which has been widely accepted by international food industries over the past four years. He credited the signing of the Jordan-European partnership accord and the "exemption of the first 4,000 tonnes of the paste" for the positive affect and the incentive given to the firms to submit their offers (Al Ra'i).

South Korea crisis threatens world payments system

HONG KONG (AFP) — South Korea's financial crisis, which has forced the government to make an emergency request to speed up rescue funds, could cause a breakdown in the international payments system, economists warn.

Some experts say a payments default is now possible.

South Korea's Finance Minister Lim Chang-Yul on Thursday asked the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to provide \$15.5 billion by the end of the month in addition to \$5.5 billion sent last week as part of its rescue package.

If the IMF were to respond, the drawdown would exhaust the \$21 billion IMF share of the \$57 billion international bailout, the largest in history.

Before giving South Korea's signature on the bailout package, IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus said the country was on the verge of a "financial catastrophe."

The agreement with the IMF has failed to staunch the drop in confidence in the country among world financial markets.

As the South Korean currency continues to fall, domestic banks and business search desperately for dollars to pay their short-term debts. On Thursday, it took only three minutes for the won to hit the maximum allowed daily fall, to 1,719.80 to the dollar. It fell heavily again on Friday.

The risk of payment default is not inevitable, but it exists," said Guillaume Lejoindre, director general of Credit Agricole Indosuez in Seoul.

"The calculation is simple," he said.

"Korea is to receive \$9 billion from the IMF and other multilateral institutions between now and the end of the year. The short-term debt due at the same time is difficult to calculate precisely, but it is around \$20-billion. The countries still have \$4 to \$5 billion in reserves, but they can't let it fall to nothing. The money isn't there," Mr. Lejoindre explained.

If financial creditors continue to pull back, the IMF will have to speed up implementation of its support or Japan and the United States will have to be willing to play the second line of defence," he said.

In addition to the \$57 billion support package, industrialised countries including Japan and the United States have agreed to provide a second line of \$20 billion, but only in reserve if the first line doesn't solve the problems.

For Kenneth Courtis, chief economist and strategist for Deutsche Bank in Tokyo, "the threat to the international financial system is the most serious since the collapse of the Bretton Woods system at the beginning of the 1970s" in which the U.S. decision to drop the peg between gold and the dollar sparked a collapse of the currency system.

"The Koreans don't have money. They need \$21 billion immediately. If not, we will move toward a breakdown in the international payment system," he pointed out.

If this happened, "nobody would sell anything to South Korea unless they were paid in cash, and nobody would buy anything without putting the money in escrow until the goods were delivered," he said.

"The package is short \$20 to \$25 billion," he said, estimating that South Korea needed between \$60 and \$80 billion.

Arab bourses surge in third quarter

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab bourses gained around \$17 billion in the third quarter and performed well in the following months because of strong oil prices and corporate performances, figures have showed.

More than half the gains were made in Saudi Arabia, where banks and companies recorded some of their best financial results in several years.

While global markets are still reeling under the repercussions of the October stock crash, only one of the Arab bourses declined.

Turnover in Kuwait plummeted by nearly 37 per cent to 2.06 billion dinars (\$6.8 billion) in the third quarter compared with the previous three months, according to the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), which operates a regional stock network tracking nine Arab exchanges.

But the combined market capitalisation of the nine exchanges peaked at \$140.4 billion at the end of September compared with \$123.1 billion at the end of June, the fund said in its quarterly report.

In Saudi Arabia, which has the biggest Arab stock market, capitalisation soared to \$57.5 billion from \$48.3 billion.

There were also increases in the stock markets of Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia. Oman's Muscat Securities Market reported the biggest gain, jumping by around 44 per cent.

The AMF's network does not include Qatar's burgeoning exchange or the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which has emerged as one of the biggest financial centres in the region although it has no trading floor.

"There was a growth in the Arab markets in the third quarter and performance remained strong in the last quarter. The joint stock index increased to 138.2 points at the end of

the third quarter from 126.6 points at the end of the second quarter of this year," the AMF report said.

Most regional bourses resisted the turmoil that hit world stock markets in late October, dipping slightly but recovering a few days later.

Dealers attributed this to strong government control over the Arab markets and the absence of any major link to international markets.

"Regional bourses have little exposure to international markets and this makes them almost immune to any crisis," a Saudi stockbroker said.

The report showed growth in Saudi Arabia covered the index and the number of shares and trading companies, which increased by one to 71 firms.

The surge was mainly caused by the strong performance of local banks and companies due to an economic upturn and high oil prices, which allowed the Saudi government to boost spending to one of its highest levels in years.

An official Saudi report showed banks in the world's dominant oil power recorded an increase of around 15 per cent in net profits to 3.21 billion Saudi riyals (\$836 million) in the first nine months of 1997 from 2.79 billion riyals (\$744 million) in the same period of 1996. Several other companies have also reported good results.

"The Saudi stock market will record one of its best years in 1997. This is normal in an atmosphere of growing investors' confidence," a broker said.

The AMF report said the decline in Kuwait, which has the most speculative market in the Middle East, was caused mainly by a government decision to restrict financing of share transactions by local banks and other financial institutions to prevent a fresh stock crash in the wealthy emirate.

Malki records history of banks in Jordan

By Suha Ma'ayeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The encyclopaedia entitled "The History of the Jordanian Banking Sector," the first authentic and only documented work in the Arab World, is almost finished, its author Abdallah Al Malki told the Jordan Times Sunday.

Dr. Malki, who is the director general of the Association of Banks in Jordan, described the work as a comprehensive and accurate reference for financial analysts, researchers, students, bankers and others who seek information regarding the Kingdom's banking system.

"You can find information about all the banks in Jordan, how and when they were established, the founders and the changes the banks went through after their establishment," Dr. Malki said.

Moreover, the work also provides full analysis and reviews about the balance sheets and the profit and loss statements of the banks.

"I tried to read into the figures of the balance sheets and the policies adopted by any bank in terms of deposit, lending, liquidity which also includes capital," he explained.

Dr. Malki stressed that the periodicals review developments and decisions by the board of directors and the general assemblies.

"I derived the events and facts directly from the unpublished, internal records of the banking system, decisions of the board of directors, minutes of their meetings and the purposes of the general assemblies in addition to eyewitness reports," he explained.

Asked about the most interesting parts of the encyclopaedia, Dr. Malki said: "The history of the crises and conflicts among the members of the boards of directors, influential groups and business interests were the most exciting."

"Some of the material in these books have never been told before," he explained. He cited examples from the first volume which explores the financial crisis which hit the Jordanian economy in the years of 1988 and 1989.

Besides this, the books contain an alphabetical introduction of almost four thousand bankers and other information pertaining to their background, education and their present positions.

Dr. Malki pointed out that these volumes are references to financial institutions. "The last two years I dedicated my time to write this encyclopaedia," he said.

"We collected the information in one volume for those who didn't cooperate with us," the author said.

"This work will never be over because you could add as many chapters as the others allow you to do so, especially the ones who keep the documents in the banking institutions," he concluded.

REUTERS • REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7770	0.6061	1.4370	100.25	1.4198	1742.50	2.0015
DE Mark	0.5627	1.0000	0.3408	0.8085	73.29	0.7988	980.31	1.1263
GB Sterling	1.6500	2.9300	1.0000	2.3644	215.01	2.3427	2875.13	3.3025
CH Franc	0.6859	123.62	0.4214	1.0000	90.62	0.8877	1212.17	139.31
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3638	0.4648	1.1028	1.0000	1.0896	13.37	163.61
CA Dollar	0.7043	1.2611	0.4265	1.0118	1.09	1.0000	1226.85	1.4092
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0195	0.3475	0.8624	1339.58	0.8146	1.0000	11.48
NL Guilder	0.4996	88.78	0.3025	71.78	86.03	0.7092	870.38	1.0000
FR Franc	0.1682	0.2987	0.1018	0.2457	21.88	0.2388	33.64	33.6400

Middle Eastern Currencies	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	FRF
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7770	0.6061	1.4370	100.25	1.4198	1742.50	2.0015
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.5000	0.8293	0.8325	5.1424	0.4308	5.1878	2162.43
Saudi Riyal	0.2665	0.1888	0.1005	0.87	0.0813	0.98	408.21	0.9092
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	0.9483	0.88	0.8087	9.74	408.01	6.0053
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	0.10301	0.8301	0.0837	1.01	420.51	0.9325
Kuwait Dinar	3.2800	2.3222	1.23016	1.2266	11.94	12.05	5021.65	0.9325
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	0.10212	0.1028	0.9913	0.0830	416.85	0.9244
Lebanese 1000	0.05	0.4624	2.4437	0.2462	2.3781	0.1991	2.3990	2.2175
Egyptian	0.2945	0.2085	1.1047	0.1110	1.0724	0.0958	1.0816	450.96

Energy	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Brent	17.30	17.16	17.16	17.16	17.16
W. Texas	18.18	18.16	18.16	18.16	18.16
Bonny	17.90	17.16	17.16	17.16	17.16
Dubai	16.40	16.32	16.32	16.32	16.32
UL Gas	176.00	175.00	175.00	175.00	175.00

Metal Prices	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Gold (oz's)	282.5	283	283	283	283
Silver (oz's)	5.88	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9
Platinum (oz's)	380.5	382.5	382.5	382.5	382.5
AL (3 Months)	1563	1568	1568	1568	1568
CU (3 Months)	1810	1815	1815	1815	1815
Zinc (3 Months)	1137.5	1142	1142	1142	1142
Lead (3 Months)	635	637	637	637	637
NI (3 Months)	6230	6250	6250	6250	6250

Energy	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
Coffee (cib's)	182	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1784	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	285.1	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	124.5	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot
Soya (cib's)	24.32	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot
Tea (\$/kg)	188	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	370	Spot	Spot	Spot	Spot

JOD Cross Rates	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
US Dollar	0.708	1.2710	0.410	1.0000	100.00
GB Sterling	1.1672	2.0510	0.730	1.7770	177.70
DE Mark	0.3979	0.6980	0.250	0.5627	56.27
CH Franc	0.4921	0.8800	0.310	0.6859	68.59
FR Franc	0.1189	0.2110	0.075	0.1682	16.82
JP Yen	0.5429	0.9700	0.350	0.8085	80.85
NI Guilder	0.3533	0.6200	0.220	0.4996	49.96
IT Lira	0.4078	0.7200	0.260	0.4006	40.06

Islamic banking develops, but faces hurdles

MANAMA (R) — Islamic banking is developing gradually, but the industry faces major challenges including a monopoly by conventional banks and lack of government support, bankers have said.

Gulf banker Majid Bader Al Refai said it was essential for Muslim states to encourage the opening of more Islamic banks by awarding them contracts to finance big projects in accordance with Islamic Sharia (law).

"In the Gulf, first of all they need more government support," he told Reuters. "Support by Arab Gulf states is currently good, but they have to go a step further."

Mr. Refai is chairman of the newly formed Quantum Financial Advisors in Kuwait which specialises in Islamic investment

banking.

"I think Islamic financial institutions have to become more proactive," he said.

"A lot of monopolies exist in the Gulf. These monopolies have to be broken by having more Islamic banks," Mr. Refai added.

Islamic banks do not deal in interest — the core of the Western banking system — as it is considered by many Muslims as usury, banned by Sharia. There are some 200 Islamic financial institutions globally serving the world's 1.2 billion Muslims.

Bahrain is the banking hub of the Gulf, a region which is home to Islam's holiest sites, but has traditionally looked to the West for its sophisticated banking services.

Mr. Refai expected Islamic banking to spread in future, but said "the question is

how fast."

Sheikh Saleh Kamel, chairman of Saudi Arabian investment conglomerate Dallah Al Baraka Group, warned a lack of official recognition for Islamic banking products was hindering development.

"Islamic banking is crucial to enable Muslim societies to draw efficiently on their national resources and find culturally acceptable ways to integrate financially into the global economy," another senior banker said.

He said Islamic banking was developing, not as a result of the growing awareness of Islam, but primarily by "the fact that Muslims in the last 15 to 20 years have built significant wealth that necessitates banking services compounded by the fact that usury is a very serious offence in Islam."

Mr. Refai said Islamic financial advisory services do not exist in the Gulf. "All Arab Gulf states are dying for it. They are desperate," he said, adding his consultancy had fielded requests for financial advisory services in Malaysia and Egypt.

Bahrain Monetary Agency Governor Abdullah Saif said Islamic banks would provide substantial opportunities for specialisation and for diversification in the Western and Muslim World.

"With some \$100 billion of Islamic resources available for investment, Islamic banking and finance will offer a major opportunity for further significant financial growth and innovation regionally and globally," he said.

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2nd Islamic Games for Women kick off in Tehran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran on Saturday kicked off its second Islamic Games for Women, which are due to run for ten days in Tehran and other cities.

The start of the exclusively female games was marked by a musical ceremony and show at Azadi Stadium west of Tehran attended by athletes from 16 Muslim countries, and some 12,000 spectators. Former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani presided over the opening.

Hundreds of young people, girls and boys, took part in the opening celebrations which also included theatrical demonstrations and musical presentations.

A group of 500 boys on roller-skates carried in a copy of the Koran on a shining platter to place it before a one of five young girls dressed in white and seated in the center of the stadium.

The ceremony continued with two theatrical pieces. The first evoked the "ascension of the prophet" of Islam,

the second the victory of a girl over Sohrab, the hero of the epic "Book of Kings" by Ferdosi.

The 2nd Islamic Games for Women follows a first such event organized by Iran in February 1993. During the games, a team of 16 Iranian women will fight for titles in a karate contest, a first for Iranian women since the Islamic revolution. Another new sport for the Games will be equestrian competition.

Other scheduled events are track and field, chess, swimming, basketball, volleyball, tennis, shooting, badminton, gymnastics and squash.

The athletes come from seventeen countries: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Gabon, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Syria, Turkmenistan, and Yemen. The games are organized by Iran's Sports Solidarity Council for Women, headed by Faezeh Hashemi,

daughter of former Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

In opening remarks, Faezeh Hashemi called on young people "to take sports seriously."

According to the official program, the games were originally to be hosted by Pakistan. But they returned to Iran after Islamabad pleaded financial difficulties.

To extend the games beyond the Muslim world, the organisers have also invited a representative from the International Olympic Committee to watch the games.

Following the Islamic revolution in Iran, women's sports were ignored. The participation of women in public sports contests was deemed by clerics to be contrary to the traditional role of women in Islam.

But women's interest in sports has made a comeback in recent years, with women demanding to be included in the country's sports life.

Dortmund fall to Cologne as Bayern finally win

BONN (AFP) — Bayern Munich earned a 3-2 Bundesliga victory over Borussia

Monchengladbach on Saturday, ending a three-game losing streak, while world club champions Borussia Dortmund crashed to a 4-2 loss to bottom-of-the-table Cologne.

Dortmund's loss left the European Cup holders only two points off bottom spot in the standings.

Bayern moved back to within four points of Kaiserslautern after the leaders were beaten 2-0 by resurgent Hertha Berlin on Friday evening.

Third-placed Stuttgart kept up their title chase with a 1-0 win over lowly Arminia Bielefeld.

Carsten Jancker put Bayern 2-0 up with goals in the 20th and 50th minutes. A third strike by Christian Nerlinger (51) looked to have wrapped up the game, but Bayern relaxed too early.

"We pulled out the plug and suddenly found ourselves in difficulty," Jancker said.

Monchengladbach captain Stefan Effenberg curled the ball in delightfully from an 18-metre free-kick in the 63rd minute and Joergen Pettersson scored with a hopeful shot 25 minutes later — but the visitors ran out of time.

"Bayern are very dangerous from set plays," Gladbach trainer Norbert Meier said. "All their goals came from mistakes by us. But even with a 3-0 deficit my men worked hard and never gave up. They showed character, plugged away and played passionate football. Maybe if we had had another five minutes it could have been different."

Bayern were clearly delighted to have ended their mid-season slump.

"I'm happy despite our lapses in concentration," said coach Giovanni Trapattoni. "The players showed what they are made of and responded well after our recent defeat."

Austria's newly-crowned Footballer of the Year Toni Polster sank Borussia Dortmund singlehandedly with a hat-trick for Cologne, lifting his side three places off the bottom of the standings.

Polster struck twice in the opening 17 minutes before Heiko Herrlich (20th) and Stephane Chapuisat (50th) restored the balance.

"At 2-2 I thought we would be lucky to get a point," said Polster.

Instead Cologne got three — thanks to further goals from Iranian international Khodadad Azizi and Polster himself.

"We know we played badly. There's no excuse," Dortmund playmaker Andreas Moller said.

Bottom side Bielefeld's loss at Stuttgart came because of a trademark free-kick by Bulgarian Krassimir Balakov, while promoted Wolfsburg moved up to sixth with a 2-1 win away to Hamburg.

Schalke led early through Joban de Kock's headed goal against Duisburg but the visitors fought back gamely and deserved their 1-1 draw after Markus Osthoff found the net on the half hour.



Austria's Hermann Maier leaves the starting gate on his way to clocking the best time of the men world cup giant slalom in Val d'Isere. Maier won the race ahead of Switzerland's Michael Von Gruenigen and Austria's Stefan Eberharter (Reuters photo)

SCOREBOARD

• African Champions Cup final

Second leg
Raja Casablanca (Mor) 1 Goldfields (Gha) 0
after extra time
Aggregate score 1-1. Raja won 5-4 on penalties

• Confederation Cup

Group B
South Africa 2 Czech Republic 2
Uruguay 2 United Arab Emirates 0

• French League

Bordeaux 0 Cannes 1
Guingamp 1 Auxerre 1
Lens 0 Marseille 1
Lyon 0 Le Havre 1
Toulouse 1 Montpellier 1
Nantes 2 Strasbourg 1
Chateauroux 1 Bastia 1

• Belgian League

Westerlo 0 Aalst 3
Beveren 0 Ekeren 1
Antwerp 1 Lokeren 2
Molenbeek 1 Charleroi 2
Lierse 2 Mouscron 0
Ghent 1 St Truiden 1

• Dutch League

Heerenveen 3 Vitesse Arnhem 2
Roda Kerkrade 3 Maastricht 0
S. Rotterdam 4 Willem II Tilburg 1

• Spanish First Division

Betis 2 Mallorca 1
FC Barcelona 3 Espanyol 1
Athletic Bilbao 2 Celta 1

• Portuguese First Division

Maritimo 1 Benfica 0
FC Porto 1 Guimaraes 0
Academica 0 Rin Ave 0
Belenenses 1 Salgueiros 2
Campomaiorense 4 Braga 1
Amadora 4 Chaves 1
Varzim 0 Boavista 0

• National Football League

NY Giants 30 Washington 10
Pittsburgh 24 New England 21

• Sydney Champions tournament

Final:
Jimmy Connors bt John Lloyd 3-6, 6-2, 10-7

• NBA

Indiana 109 Washington 92
Charlotte 85 Cleveland 84
Detroit 93 Boston 77
New Jersey 133 Denver 95
New York 95 Philadelphia 83
Minnesota 112 Phoenix 101
Chicago 97 Toronto 70
San Antonio 107 Orlando 78
Miami 87 Milwaukee 84
Golden State 95 Sacramento 91

• Asian Women's Soccer Championships

Japan 2 Chinese Taipei 0
China 2 North Korea 0

Celtic win 1-0

GLASGOW (AFP) — The Scottish Premier Division title race intensified on Saturday after a late strike by Craig Burley gave Celtic a 1-0 win over leaders Hearts in a frantic battle at Parkhead.

But there was disappointment for reigning champions Rangers who missed the chance to go top of the table after being held to a goalless draw at Dunfermline.

Celtic missed a host of chances in the first half, but with just 11 minutes to go a Henrik Larsson cross from the left was played into a crowded area where Scotland star Burley crashed the ball down before crashing it past Gilles Rousset.

Victory was well deserved by Celtic who are now just two points behind Hearts and one behind arch rivals Rangers going into the festive Christmas period.

Celtic coach Wim Jansen praised the persistence and patience of his rejuvenated side, saying: "We were running out of time, but we kept playing, gave everything to score a goal and finally we got a good goal. I felt we did deserve to win this game against the top team as it was important for us to do so."

For Hearts manager Jim Jefferies the defeat was a major disappointment with his team displaying little of the class which has taken them to the summit.

Jefferies said: "A 50,000-plus crowd is one of those things we are going to have put up with, and we have to come to places like this and believe in ourselves."

Rangers, meanwhile, without international stars Paul Gascoigne and Brian Laudrup and lacking a striker on form, had to settle for a goalless draw.

Dunfermline, with leading strikers Andy Smith suspended and Gerry Britton injured, were in determined mood to ensure there would be no repeat of their 7-0 defeat when the teams last met at Ibrox earlier in the season.

Dunfermline goalkeeper Ian Westwater was never truly tested until just before half-time when he brilliantly parried Alex Cleland's close-range shot.

Elsewhere, striker Andy Walker made a sensational debut for Hibernian, scoring two goals in a 2-2 draw with fellow strugglers Aberdeen at Easter Road.

In the day's other matches, Motherwell beat Dundee Utd 1-0 while St Johnstone and Kilmarnock battled each other to a 1-1 draw.

Emotional Giants clinch division crown

EAST RUTHERFORD (AFP) — The New York Giants clinched their first NFC East title in seven years Saturday, building a 17-0 lead and forcing six turnovers in a 30-10 victory over the Washington Redskins.

The Giants (9-5-1) gave Jim Fassel a division title in his first season as a National Football League head coach and are assured of hosting a first-round playoff game on December 27 or 28.

The Redskins (7-7-1) are still alive in the wild card chase, but will need at least a win next week in their regular season finale against Philadelphia.

"I don't know if I've ever felt this good about a foot-

ball team," Fassel said. "This was a very emotional win. No one expected us to be here."

The Giants were down, now we're back up."

In Saturday's other game, Pittsburgh rallied for a 24-21 overtime win over New England.

The win left the Patriots short of a playoff berth, while the Steelers will claim their fourth AFC Central title if Jacksonville loses at Buffalo on Sunday.

Kordell Stewart engineered a late comeback and completed a pair of crucial passes in overtime to set up Norm Johnson's 31-yard field goal as the Steelers rallied past the Pats.

It was the fourth time this



Pittsburgh Steeler quarterback Kordell Stewart (R-10) pushes into the New England Patriots line of (L-R) Chris Stale (53), Devin Wyman (72) and Todd Collins (59) to score the Steelers first touchdown from the one-yard line as teammate Paul Wiggins (Bottom-77) blocks for him in second quarter play in Foxboro, Massachusetts (Reuters photo)

season and the second time in as many weeks that the Giants have returned an interception for a TD.

"I've watched other teams play in the playoffs for three years now," Sehorn

said. "It's time for people to watch us. Unfortunately, a lot of people still probably look at us as winners of a weak division. We just have to win in the playoffs to get respect."

Marseille return to winning ways

PARIS (AFP) — Marseille, without a win in their last three outings, snapped up a 1-0 victory at Lens on Saturday to move up to join Paris St Germain on 37 points — one point behind pacesetters Monaco and Metz.

Monaco, Metz and Paris St Germain have a match in hand and play Sunday.

Xavier Gravelaine scored the Marseille goal after just nine minutes slamming home a fierce left-footed volley from outside the box after picking up a ball from dangerous Italian front-runner Fabrizio Ravanelli.

Ravanelli had caused all sorts of problems for the home defenders in the opening minutes, forcing a spectacular save from Guillaume Warmuz after five minutes and then being ruled off-side with another chance two minutes later.

Cannes also notched up a surprise by inflicting a 1-0 victory over Bordeaux — a 33rd minute penalty from Dutch player Frank Vandenburg ending the unbeaten home record of the 'Girondins' this season.

Auxerre, safely through to the UEFA Cup quarter-finals came away with a 1-1 draw from Guingamp while at the foot of the table Le Havre added in Lyon's woes by scoring a 1-0 away win. It was Lyon's sixth defeat in eleven matches at Gerland.

In other matches, Nantes beat Strasbourg 2-1, while Toulouse against Montpellier and Chateauroux against Bastia ended in 1-1 draws.

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	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Risham Yanes Theatre
	HERCULES AND THE AMAZON WOMEN	Jim Carrey ... in LIAR — LIAR	Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi ... in AL MASEER (Arabic)	Rowan Atkinson... in MR. BEAN	ABDOUN Harrison Ford ... in AIR FORCE ONE	ABDOUN Mel Gibson & Julia Roberts... in CONSPIRACY THEORY	NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
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SPORTS IN BRIEF

Iran suffer snub for coaching post

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran have received a quadruple snub in their search for a high profile coach to lead them at the 1998 World Cup finals in France. It was announced on Sunday, Daryouch Mostafavi, President of the Iranian Football Federation, said that Carlos Bilardo, who coached Argentina to the 1986 title, former Barcelona boss Johan Cruyff, Yugoslavian Bora Milutinovic, who took minnows Costa Rica to the last 16 in 1990 and was sacked by Mexico recently because of their poor manner of qualifying for the World Cup finals, and Portuguese coach Eduardo Vinga had all turned the job down. "Unfortunately the coaches we contacted did not want the job," Mostafavi said. Mostafavi said that they were currently negotiating with former Bulgarian coach Dimitar Penev, who took his side to the 1994 semi-finals, but if that failed they would renew negotiations with current coach Valdeir Vieira, the Brazilian who was hired after the national side lost 2-0 to Qatar in an Asian qualifier. Vieira, who was originally hired to coach the Under-23 team for the 2000 Olympics, is the first foreigner to coach the Iranian side and led them to a World Cup play-off triumph over Australia on away goals a fortnight ago.

Two weightlifting records set

CHIANG MAI (AFP) — Russia's Andrei Chemerkin broke two world records in the over 108 kg category in the weightlifting world championships Sunday, with 262.5 kg in the clean-and-jerk and 462.5 kg in the overall. The previous record for the clean-and-jerk was set at the Atlanta Olympics in 1996 with 260 kg. The previous record for the overall category had been held since 1994 by Alexander Kurlovich of Byelorussia with 457.5 kg.

Connors wins Sydney title

SYDNEY (AFP) — The sourness towards a vitriolic newspaper column evaporated as Jimmy Connors came from behind to win the Sydney Champions tennis tournament here Sunday. The 45-year-old American tennis great was all smiles after fighting back from a set down against Britain's John Lloyd to win his 29th Champions crown in a three-set final, 3-6, 6-2, 10-7. Under the Champions format, matches are the best of three sets but the third is played as a tiebreak, with the winner being the first player to win 10 points. Only the day before Connors said he was considering giving the game away, threatening never to return to Australia following a savage Sydney tabloid newspaper column on him. But Connors shrugged it aside Sunday saying it would take a lot more than that to run him out of town. "It takes an awful lot to run me out of anything, especially from places that I like and people I've made friends with over so many years," he said. "And just because there's one controversial article doesn't mean that I'm not going to come back." Connors, who in the mid-1970s was world No.1 for a record 159 consecutive weeks — he won 133 ATP singles titles — said he planned to continue playing for another two to three years.

Lizarraga wins featherweight crown

POMPAÑO BEACH, Florida (AFP) — American Hector Lizarraga won the vacant International Boxing Federation featherweight title here Saturday, stopping South African Welton Neta in 10 rounds of a scheduled 12-round battle. Lizarraga's dominance became more and more clear from the sixth round on, but it was not until just after the 10th round that the referee stopped the fight on doctor's advice. Lizarraga claimed his 34th victory, his 20th inside the distance, with eight defeats and five draws. Neta lost for the third time in 43 fights.

McAllister out for six weeks

COVENTRY (AFP) — Scotland World Cup skipper Gary McAllister will be out of action for six weeks after aggravating a recent knee injury when playing for Coventry in a 4-0 English Premiership win over Tottenham on Saturday. McAllister, 32, had made a quick comeback after only a fortnight's break caused by the injury, which he initially suffered in the Sky Blues' previous home match against Leicester. McAllister, who is also Coventry's captain, was forced to limp out of the action after 32 minutes, and now manager Gordon Strachan is resigned to being without his most influential player until the end of January. Strachan said: "It looks like he has aggravated the initial problem and we are looking at Gary being out for six weeks, which is a big blow to us and him. He is a very brave lad and tried to put mind over matter and play for us. That shows what a big heart he has. He's tried to get out there on the park and play for Coventry City — but sometimes you just can't do it."

Fan dies after having throat slit

BERLIN (AFP) — A Danish handball supporter died after having his throat slit following the world women's championship semi-final between Denmark and Russia here on Saturday. Several other people were injured after during the knife attack in the packed stands at the match in the Max Schmeling Hall, confirmed German Handball Federation president Bernd Steinhauser. Steinhauser said the attacker had been arrested, but refused to reveal his nationality. Denmark won the match 32-22 and will face Norway in the final.

China takes women's soccer title

GUANGZHOU (AFP) — Liu Ailing scored twice to lead China to its sixth consecutive Asian Women's Football Championship title with a 2-0 victory over North Korea here on Sunday. Liu, who was named the tournament's most valuable player, cracked the North Korean defence after 48 minutes and then followed up with another strike in the 59th. Earlier in the day, Japan won the consolation match against Chinese Taipei 2-0 to clinch third place in the regional tournament — and the final berth in the 1999 women's World Cup, to be played in the United States. Homare Sawa, scored twice for Japan, confirming her as the tournament's leading scorer with 13. The North Korean side, which had been absent from international competition for more than a year before the tournament, put China to a tougher test than in their first-round meeting. China won the initial match 3-1 but not before North Korea had ended the hosts two-year run of not conceding a goal.



Raja Casablanca's Nazir Abdelkrim (L) and Ghana Goldfields Issa Abderahmane chase down a ball during their African Champions League Cup match in Casablanca. Raja Casablanca won the Cup 5-4 on penalties after drawing 1-1 on aggregate with Ghana's Goldfields (Reuters photo)



German light-heavyweight boxer Dariusz "Tiger" Michalczewski lands a punch on Daren Zenner from Canada during their world championship boxing fight. Michalczewski stopped Zenner with a technical K.O. in the seventh round to retain his title of the World Boxing Organisation (WBO) (Reuters photo)

Venables remains in Australia

SYDNEY (AFP) — Terry Venables has agreed in principle to remain as Australia's football coach and take Australia to the 2002 World Cup in Japan and South Korea. Soccer Australia chairman David Hill said Sunday. "His contract with Australia, understood to be worth A\$400,000 (\$276,000) over 18 months, will due to expire next July, but according to Hill, the former England team manager has reached agreement in principle to continue beyond that. The announcement follows the national heartbreak over Australia's failure to make next year's World Cup finals in France after losing on away goals 3-3 to Iran over two legs last month. Australia outplayed Iran to lead 2-0 after 48 minutes before 85,000 fans in Melbourne on November 29, only to be pulled back with two goals in four minutes by the fast-breaking Iranians following a 1-1 draw in Tehran a week earlier. In agreeing to an extension of his contract, Venables has spurned a lucrative offer, reportedly worth a potential A\$1.2 million (\$830,000) for two months work, to manage Nigeria at the World Cup finals next June and July in France. According to Australian Associated Press in Riyadh where Australia is playing in the Confederations Cup, the team's extended contract will enable Venables, 54, to coach at club level, possibly even in the English Premier League where he has been linked with several clubs. Venables, already chairman of troubled English first division club Portsmouth, is unbeaten in 15 matches as Australian coach. During that time the Soccerroos have defeated four 1998 World Cup finalists — Norway, South Korea and Tunisia, with the latest scalp of 11th-ranked Mexico being added in their opening 3-1 Confederations Cup win in Riyadh on Friday. Hill, who is staking much in the investment of Venables' renowned coaching skills, said the aim was to keep Venables for the 2002 World Cup. "That's the intention. He wants to do it, and we want him to do it," Hill told AFP. "He's really developed an affinity with Australia. The guy clearly is a phenomenal coach. We are paying, by our standards, a lot of money for him, but it's worth what he's worth." The new deal is believed to result in Venables being paid less on an annual basis, but he would be free to do other things.

Hornets beat Cavaliers 85-84, Spurs overcome Magic

CLEVELAND (AP) — Glen Rice scored 32 points and David Wesley hit a decisive 3-pointer in the final two minutes as Charlotte ended Cleveland's 10-game winning streak with an 85-84 victory.

The Hornets followed Friday's win over the defending champion Chicago Bulls by knocking off the NBA's hottest team. They overcame a 25-9 deficit at the end of the first quarter Saturday and kept the Cavs from rying Atlanta and the Lakers for the longest streak in the league this season.

Shawn Kemp led Cleveland with 25 points.

Indianapolis Pacers 109, Washington Wizards 92: At Indianapolis, Rik Smits scored 25 points, including 10 in the final seven minutes, as Indiana defeated Washington.

Smits added 13 rebounds for the Pacers, who made 31 of 32 free-throw attempts.

Detroit Pistons 93, Boston Celtics 77: At Auburn Hills, Michigan, Brian Williams scored 29 of his season-high 31 points in the second half as the Detroit Pistons won their fourth straight.

Williams also had 15 rebounds, while Grant Hill added 19 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Pistons.

Walter McCarty and Antoine Walker each had 19 points for Boston. McCarty's total matched his career high.

New York Knicks 95, Philadelphia 76ers 83: In New York, John Starks scored 28 points and took over down the stretch to help the New York Knicks avenge one of their worst defeats of the season.

Starks scored 12 points in the final period and came up with a steal, a key loose ball and a fast break dunk.



Chicago Bulls' Michael Jordan puts pressure on Toronto Raptors' Marcus Camby during first quarter action at the United Center. Chicago won 97-70 (Reuters photo)

right when the Knicks needed them to help new York get even for a 15-point defeat at Philadelphia last Sunday.

Allan Houston added 23 points, Patrick Ewing had 17 points and 13 rebounds and Charlie Ward handed out eight assists and blocked three of Allen Iverson's shots.

New Jersey Nets 133, Denver Nuggets 95: In East Rutherford, Rookie Keith Van Horn scored 21 of his season-high 30 points in the decisive first half as the New Jersey Nets routed the Denver Nuggets.

The Nets, who led by 24 at halftime, scored their most points of the season and snapped a three-game losing streak. The Nuggets lost their fourth in a row and remained winless in 12

road games this year.

Eight Nets scored in double figures. Sherman Douglas finished with 19 points and Jayson Williams had 18 points and 22 rebounds.

Minnesota Timberwolves 112, Phoenix Suns 101: At Minneapolis, Stephen Marbury scored six straight points in the final 2:16 as Minnesota defeated Phoenix in a game that featured the ejection of Suns coach Danny Ainge.

Ainge was ejected after receiving his second technical foul from referee Ron Olesiak with 8:59 left. After the call, Ainge

charged onto the floor and had to be restrained by players and assistant coaches before exiting calmly.

Marbury finished with 12 points and 14 assists, while Sam Mitchell led the Wolves with a season-high 24.

San Antonio Spurs 107, Orlando Magic 78: In San Antonio, rookie Tim Duncan scored a season-high 32 points and grabbed 11 rebounds as San Antonio ended Orlando's four-game winning streak.

David Robinson had 18 points and nine rebounds for the Spurs, while Horace Grant led the Magic with 14 points.

Chicago Bulls 97, Toronto Raptors 70: In Chicago, Ron Harper scored 20 points and the Chicago Bulls snapped a two-game losing streak despite getting only 11 points from Michael Jordan.

Toni Kukoc added 15 points and Dennis Rodman grabbed 14 rebounds for the Bulls, whose most decisive victory this season followed losses at Orlando and Charlotte.

Jordan went 4-for-16 from the field and was held 16 points below his season average.

Golden State Warriors 95, Sacramento Kings 91, OT: In Oakland, California, Joe Smith had 25 points and the Golden State Warriors scored the first seven points of overtime to beat the Sacramento Kings.

After a 1-13 start, the Warriors are 3-3 since the suspension of star Latrell Sprewell for an attack on his coach.

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Netanyahu obstinate as cabinet talks convene on troop pullback

TEL AVIV (AP) — In the face of mounting American pressure for an Israeli troop pullback from the West Bank, a defiant Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Jewish state won't "commit suicide" to please others.

Mr. Netanyahu and his cabinet on Sunday morning convened what was expected to be a contentious day-long session to talk about principles of a final settlement with the Palestinians, which in turn will be the basis for a decision on the troop withdrawal, Israel Radio said.

"Let's not commit suicide in order to please someone," Mr. Netanyahu said in a statement to Israeli media late Saturday. "The discussion on the final status is fateful for the future of the country, and it is the people of Israel — not the Americans or the Europeans — who have to live with it."

Outside the prime minister's office, where the cabinet meeting was being held, about 500 settlers noisily protested against moving ahead with any pullback. They blew whistles and waved signs reading "no more conces-

sions."

Mr. Netanyahu's statement strongly suggested no decision on a withdrawal would be made Sunday, despite American pressure to bring a plan to the table when he meets with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Paris on Wednesday or Thursday.

Ms. Albright was to meet separately with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in London on Thursday, Palestinian officials said.

According to Israeli media reports, Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon were to present alternate security maps outlining troop withdrawals and possible arrangements for a final settlement to the cabinet.

According to the Yediot Aharanot newspaper, Mr. Mordechai and Mr. Sharon were to propose that the government quickly begin construction of a road that would cut through the West Bank. To build such a road, Israel would have to appropriate land from the Palestinians, and that proposal has already drawn angry

Netanyahu secretly authorised new West Bank highway — Israeli TV

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli public television reported Saturday that the Israeli government plans to build a new major highway on the West Bank which has been secretly authorised by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The new "Highway 80" would give Israel exclusive control of a zone 200 kilometres from north to south, and 10 kilometres wide, in the Judean desert and the Jordan valley, the television said.

reaction.

After the closed-door session, Mr. Netanyahu was to update U.S. envoy Martin Indyk on the meeting.

Sources in Mr. Netanyahu's government told Israel Radio that the timing of Mr. Indyk's visit was meant to put pressure on Israel to reach a decision on troop withdrawal.

However, Mr. Indyk, the former U.S. ambassador to Israel and newly-appointed assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, insisted Saturday after meeting with Mr. Arafat that the Clinton administration was merely continuing its role as a partner in the peace process.

"Pressure is not a word that is in the American vocabulary. We are seeking to encourage

both sides... to play the role of full partner and honest broker," Mr. Indyk said.

The Palestinians blame the stalling of the peace process largely on Israel's settlement expansion and its failure to move ahead with pullbacks.

Israel, in turn, accuses Mr. Arafat's Palestinian National Authority of not doing enough to crack down on terrorists.

Yitzhak Levy, minister of transportation, said his fellow right-wing party members in the government would oppose ceding more land to the Palestinians.

"Why should we argue among ourselves over a withdrawal when the Palestinians are not even prepared to fulfil their obligations?" Mr. Levy said on Army Radio.

AI slams Israeli bill clamping down on intifada compensation

NICOSIA (AFP) — Human rights group Amnesty International on Monday condemned a draft Israeli law which could bar thousands of Palestinians from receiving reparations for injuries suffered during the Intifada against Israeli occupation.

London-based Amnesty said the bill being considered by Israel's parliament or Knesset "threatens a victim's basic human right to seek redress for past violations."

The Knesset's law and constitution committee is to start reviewing the bill on Tuesday after it passed its first reading before the full Knesset in July. Approval of a third reading would make the bill law.

The law aims to exempt Israel's security forces from civil liability for most of their

activities in the West Bank, excluding occupied Arab east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, and would be applied retrospectively.

As the world last week marked both International Human Rights Day and the 10th anniversary of the start of the Intifada or uprising against Israel, Amnesty said adoption of the law would be a "step backwards."

"It is nothing but an attempt by Israel to evade its international obligations to pay compensation to victims of human rights violations," it said in a statement received in Nicosia.

Amnesty said that in recent years Israeli courts have awarded large damages to individuals or their families after being injured through

the "negligent behaviour" of Israel's security forces.

The draft law would not only affect future operations, but also cases currently being heard by Israeli courts, it said. "Basic rights for victims of arbitrary killings would disappear overnight," Amnesty said.

Amnesty also branded the bill as discriminatory, saying that the law only applied to the West Bank and Gaza Strip and that a person killed or injured by Israeli forces inside Israel would still be able to sue for compensation.

An Israeli justice ministry spokesman said last week that since 1988, more than 4,000 damage suits totalling millions of dollars have been filed against Israel.

Netanyahus cancel subscription to offending newspaper

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sarah cancelled their subscription to an Israeli newspaper after its publication Friday of a no-holds-barred profile of the first lady, Israeli television reported Saturday.

"You have broken all the rules of decency, of sensibility and morality," the prime minister wrote in a letter sent to the editor-in-chief of the daily Yediot Aharanot, according to the television.

"In the past, I kept my silence in the face of repeated press attacks against my wife, but this time you sought to trample on a human being's honour," Mr. Netanyahu wrote.

The Yediot expose painted Sarah as unstable, dictatorial and insanely jealous, revealing a barrage of incidents citing members of her staff and the prime minister's office.

Among the tidbits: the first lady asked a shocked assistant to taste a bottle of wine she had received as a gift to "test if it was poisoned" and she hurled shoes at a domestic servant for polishing them badly.

She flew into a jealous rage which "shook the studio" after torch singer Ofra Haza touched her husband's shoulder during a live television broadcast.

When her husband "tried to calm her down, she threatened to lodge a complaint with the police against him for beating her," the paper said.

According to the paper, she also demanded an office near her husband's with two secretaries on government salaries, although she rarely appears in the office, and she regularly receives gifts, some potentially illegal.



GREEN SANTA: A Greenpeace demonstrator dressed as Santa Claus and his team of helpers dressed as elves lead a 'Toxic Toy Patrol' through Sydney's Toys 'R' Us store taking hazardous soft PVC toys off the shelves Sunday. The environmental demonstrators delivered the toys back to the store manager, demanding they be removed from sale. Greenpeace claim the toys contain PVC, which is softened by chemicals called phthalates which they say can leach out of the plastic and be ingested by children when they suck or chew the toys. The chemicals can cause liver and kidney damage, cancer and reproductive abnormalities, Greenpeace said (Reuters photo)

Turkish Cypriots vow to 'integrate' with Turkey in response to EU move

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish-Cypriot officials on Sunday pledged to step up efforts to integrate their breakaway state with Turkey after a European Union (EU) decision to launch membership talks with the island's internationally-recognised Greek-Cypriot government.

"Following the EU move which effectively put an end to the U.N.-sponsored inter-communal talks, we will act in line with last year's joint declaration we signed with Turkey," Turkish-Cypriot "prime minister" Dervis Englu, said in Nicosia, according to the Turkish-Cypriot TAK news agency.

Under the Jan. 20 declaration, Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriot entity plan to "integrate" their state structures in gradual moves that will follow developments in EU-Cyprus accession talks.

"At a time when the Cyprus problem is not resolved, the admission of the Greek Cypriots into the EU, of which Turkey is not a member, is tantamount to destroying the balance between the two mainland countries, Turkey and Greece," Mr. Englu said.

"It is our legal right to stand against this illegal move," he said after a meeting of his administration in the Turkish-held sector of

Turkey rejects invitation to attend EU conference

ANKARA (AP) — Angered at being excluded from the European Union's latest enlargement plans, Turkey on Sunday rejected the EU's invitation to a conference to develop future relations.

"This invitation to the European Conference carries no importance for us," said Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz after an emergency cabinet meeting.

Mr. Yilmaz said Turkey would no longer discuss with the EU its disputes with Greece, the Cyprus problem and human rights issues, which have kept Ankara from making progress toward EU

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Nicosia.

Mr. Englu's statement also hinted that Turkey would reject the EU decision on Cyprus.

Two rounds of U.N.-sponsored talks between Cyprus President Glafcos Clerides, a Greek Cypriot, and Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş collapsed this summer mainly over the EU membership issue.

The United Nations was planning to hold a new round of talks next year.

At a summit in Luxembourg Saturday, EU leaders said they would launch membership talks next year with six countries including the Greek-Cypriot government and called for representatives of the Turkish-Cypriot community

to attend the negotiations. But Mr. Englu ruled out Turkish-Cypriot participation.

"This one-sided move by the Greek Cypriots to begin talks with the EU will not be hindering for us. Our participation in this process is out of the question," he said.

Mr. Denktaş told reporters on Saturday night after the EU decision, "If they want our participation, then they should recognise our state, there is no other way."

However, by officially recognising the Greek Cypriots as the island's only government, they [the EU] give this message: Cyprus is

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Palestinians welcome Farrakhan; Israel dismayed by surprise visit

GAZA CITY (AP) — Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan paid a surprise visit to the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Sunday, saying he bore Jews no ill will and wanted to help along the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Making his first visit to the Palestinian lands, Mr. Farrakhan was immediately welcomed by Palestinian leaders. He said he hoped to meet with Israeli officials as well, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israel, caught off guard by the earlier-than-announced visit, called on Mr. Farrakhan to retract anti-Semitic remarks and said there had been no decision yet on any such meetings.

"During the Christmas season... it is my hope that this troubled area in the world, that needs peace as much as any part of the earth, will find peace and

goodwill," Mr. Farrakhan told reporters in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Asked about his frequent remarks disparaging Jews and Judaism, Mr. Farrakhan said, "I think that I have been critical of some aspects of Jewish behaviour toward black people." But he added: "I have never been and am not now anti-Semitic. I do not hate the Jewish people."

The Nation of Islam leader is on what he says is a 52-nation tour that will stretch into February and take him to several countries criticised by Washington, including Libya, Iran, North Korea and Cuba. The state department advised Mr. Farrakhan that those governments could use his visits for anti-U.S. propaganda.

The visit comes at a time when the Palestinians are hoping U.S. pressure will bring concessions by the



U.S. Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan speaks to reporters Sunday soon after arriving in the West Bank (Reuters photo)

Netanyahu government and get the peace process moving again. The U.S. embassy had no comment

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Iranian president reaches out to 'the great American people'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami on Sunday hailed "the great American people," in a speech outlining his vision

of an Iranian society where human rights are respected and laws obeyed.

In the warmest words towards the United States by

an Iranian leader since the 1979 Islamic revolution, President Khatami repeatedly stressed his "great respect for the great people of the United States."

"I would like to express my respect to the nation and great people of the United States. I hope in the not too distant future I will be able to address the American people," Mr. Khatami told a press conference.

Sources close to Mr. Khatami said he would send a "New Year" message to the American people.

President Khatami said he had long supported "removing tension from the world," but shied away from questions about official dialogue with

Washington. "Our political problems with the U.S. are too complex to be easily resolved, but I hope all politicians who enjoy the weapon of logic will contribute so that we can all live in peace and quiet," he said.

Mr. Khatami, who won a surprise victory in May elections on a platform promising greater openness, complained that U.S. politicians were "out of step with their times" and "seeking monopolistic rule at any price."

But he acknowledged the democratic right of the U.S. people to choose their government.

"The government of the United States is elected by its people and we respect the

choice of the American people," he said.

The United States and Iran have had no diplomatic relations since the long-running hostage crisis in 1979-80 when U.S. diplomats were detained by Islamist revolutionaries.

Washington accuses Tehran of sponsoring terrorism and of trying to acquire a nuclear arsenal, while Iran still calls the United States "the great Satan."

"The Americans have been mistreating many countries, especially Iran, in the past 50 years and this is a fact which is very regrettable for me," said President Khatami.

In contrast to Washington's

attempts to isolate the Islamic Republic, the European Union has maintained diplomatic ties and followed a "critical dialogue" with the Iranian government.

In the past year Iran has moved to mend fences with many Arab enemies who feared Tehran's pledges to export its radical brand of Shiite Islam.

Mr. Khatami has speeded up the diplomatic drive, sealing a tentative reconciliation with countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates at last week's Islamic summit here.

"My policy has been to remove tension from the world, and we have been completely successful with the

countries of the region, Iran and the EU have also been able to resolve their dispute," he said.

Mr. Khatami condemned the D'Amato Law, a bill passed by the U.S. Congress in September that allows Washington to slap sanctions on any company investing more than \$40 million in the oil or gas industries of Iran or Libya.

The French oil firm Total signed a \$2 billion deal here in defiance of the law, with the support of EU governments.

"The United States wants to dominate at any price like its recent insult against Europe. It wanted to make a decision for

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British taxes may chase James Bond abroad

LONDON (AFP) — The suave, terribly English spy James Bond has always had expensive tastes, but even he seems to have been outstripped by Britain's "unfavourable" taxes and the strong pound. Sequences filmed in London for the latest 007 picture — "Tomorrow Never Dies" — were so costly that backers Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer may urge producers to go overseas for the next movie, said the film's producer Michael Wilson. Wilson cited the strong pound and Britain's "unfavourable" tax regime, which he claims discriminates against big-budget films. He struck out at smaller-budget films saying they "have taken advantage of UK tax breaks but they are so awful they never get distributed."

Madonna mulling new U.S. tour

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Madonna is mulling a new U.S. tour for the first time since 1990 as she finishes off a new album. "It's certainly in the realm of possibilities," her spokesman Liz Rosenberg told the Los Angeles Times, somewhat cageily. "But it depends on a lot of other elements in her movie career. Unless another film project surfaces, Madonna is prepared to go on the road." The new album is due out in March.

Michael Jordan restaurant to open in Grand Central station

NEW YORK (AFP) — Basketball star Michael Jordan has agreed to lend his name to a Grand Central Station eatery for an undisclosed sum, an official for the group that will run the establishment confirmed. The Glazier group confirmed that it will open a restaurant in February which will be more chic than the "Michael Jordan's" restaurant in Chicago. "This is not about basketball and Michael Jordan the basketball star," Peter Glazier told the New York Times. "This is about fine dining and Michael Jordan the businessman," he added. "There will not be sports memorabilia or photographs of Michael Jordan shooting baskets in the restaurant."

British Queen's season's greetings on Internet

LONDON (AFP) — For those looking for that extra something to add a hint of glamour to Christmas, log onto the Internet and you can download Queen Elizabeth's season's greetings. This year for the first time, Buckingham Palace announced, the queen's Christmas message will be relayed on the Internet. Normally her message to the Commonwealth is broadcast on television and radio on Dec. 25, but the advances of modern technology — Buckingham Palace now has its own Internet site — has meant updating royal tactics. The relevant site is <http://www.royal.gov.uk>

Millionaires chip in for Spanish king's new yacht

MADRID (AFP) — In a big "thank you" to the Spanish royal family, 25 millionaires from the Balearic Islands are chipping in to buy King Juan Carlos a new \$20 million yacht, Spain's El Pais newspaper said. The Madrid-based daily reported that the rich yachtsmen from the sunny Balearic Islands hope to offset \$20 million to replace the Spanish king's currently dilapidated yacht. A replacement yacht was to be built by the Spanish state in 1992, but at \$8.3 million, the king considered it too expensive a gift to accept.

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